



INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP JOURNAL

WINTER 2019  
VOLUME 11, ISSUE 1

*A refereed, online journal  
published thrice yearly by  
Thomas Edison State University*

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111 W. State St., Trenton, NJ 08608  
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# International Leadership Journal

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#### PRACTICE

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## **From the Editor**

February 2019

Welcome to the 32<sup>nd</sup> issue of the *International Leadership Journal*, an online, peer-reviewed journal. This issue contains four articles and one practice piece.

In the first article, Kerns offers a six-phase leader-driven framework for leading thought leadership. This dynamic approach systematically helps a leader more fully understand the process of leading thought leadership, including managing the relevant components. He also provides a leader profile for leading thought leadership and addresses some challenges with the process.

Rorholm takes a fascinating look at the emergent phenomenology of Pink Triangle memorials to homosexual Holocaust victims. She explores these memorials through the lens of communities of practice and leadership identity and to discover how leaders use the artifacts and rituals of interruptive symbols to influence shared meaning, mutual recognition, or collective memories in order to evoke dangerous memories and, eventually, ignite transformative change.

Karriker and Hartman's article examines aspiring leaders' willingness to participate in leadership development activities as influenced by leadership self-efficacy (LSE) and motivation to lead (MTL) and propose LSE and its interaction with MTL as potential "fatal flaws" in leadership actualization, particularly among potentially overly confident, yet eager, Millennials. The results of their case study indicate that LSE interacts with MTL and correlates with attenuated participation in formal, and potentially essential, developmental activities.

In the fourth article, Al-Jabari and Ghazzawi investigate theoretical and empirical perspectives that seek to explain organizational commitment with particular attention paid to the foundational research on the factors and dimensions that affect employee retention. They also provide a suggested research agenda to guide the future research efforts of scholars and practicing managers.

Finally, Shepherd and Yeon provide numerous research-based approaches to guide and to assist the English language learner (ELL) teacher leader. They note that an effective ELL teacher leader must have and share a clear vision for student language development and improvement, fostering language growth by focusing on students' strengths. ELL teacher leaders must also form strong personal relationships, built on openness and communication and on empathy and warmth, with their students. ELL teacher leaders can also create program achievement and improvement when trust is experienced in a meaningful way between them and their students.

Joseph C. Santora, EdD  
Editor

## ARTICLES

### Leading Thought Leadership: A Practice-Oriented Framework\*

Charles D. Kerns  
Pepperdine University

Thought leadership holds promise as a value-added resource for leaders to effectively lead. Organizational wisdom, competitive advantage, and sustainable success are likely advanced when leaders effectively engage their enterprise in the process of thought leadership. After briefly reviewing some key considerations and relevant literature, a six-phase leader-driven framework is offered. This dynamic approach systematically helps a leader more fully understand the process of leading thought leadership, including managing the relevant components. A leader profile for leading thought leadership is provided, and some specific challenges associated with the process are highlighted.

**Key Words:** knowledge, leader profile, leading, practice-oriented framework, thought leadership, wisdom

Thought leadership is an organizational resource that can be facilitated and managed by managerial leaders.<sup>1</sup> Leading thought leadership can lead to competitive advantage by developing innovative or new ways of doing things, engaging the talents of an organization's workforce, increased organizational value-added wisdom, and an organizational culture of active learning and innovation.

Leading thought leadership is a topic that receives substantial attention in academic publications and in the popular press (Barley, Treem, & Kuhn, 2018; Bourne, 2015; Levy, 2016; McCrimmon, 2005; Prince & Rogers, 2012), yet there is a paucity of extant literature that positions thought leadership as an organizational resource and management process that is driven by a leader. Instead, thought leadership is typically addressed at the individual level without considering the broader organizational context. The current work takes a more holistic approach to understanding and addressing the concept of thought

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\*Kerns, C. D. (2019). Leading thought leadership: A practice-oriented framework. *International Leadership Journal*, 11(1), 3–41.

<sup>1</sup>A debate comparing and contrasting management, leadership, leader and manage has occurred over more than 30 years. In this article, the terms *managerial leadership*, *management*, *leadership*, *leading*, and *managing* are used synonymously.

leadership. It is intended to provide leaders with a practice-oriented framework from which to view thought leadership as a resource to leverage and manage throughout an enterprise. This framework and perspective extends the concept of thought leadership beyond a focus on the individual thought leader by offering an opportunity for leaders to systematically look at thought leadership as a process with linkages and alignments at all organizational levels. It is a potentially value-added process that can be optimized when a leader manages it resourcefully.

Within the context of this article, *leader-driven thought leadership* is operationally defined as identifying, assessing, and managing key topics and resources to achieve wise value-added outcomes. In keeping with the extant literature calling for more examination of constructs across organizational levels, this definition is inclusive of all organizational levels (Mathieu & Chen, 2011). By effectively assessing, linking, and aligning resources—especially people—the effective leader can have an impact on individuals, groups/teams, and the overall organization. Ultimately, the effective facilitation and management of thought leadership as a resource can likely help to create an organizational culture in which the best thoughts/ideas are operationalized to successfully address pressing challenges, opportunities, and issues. Leader-driven thought leadership then becomes a vehicle to enhance wisdom, well-being, and performance (Kerns, 2018; Kupers & Statler, 2008).

### **Some Key Considerations**

The framework offered here spans a number of key dimensions associated with leadership. It recognizes the importance of individual differences, especially when a leader is looking to match challenges to be addressed with people to tackle them. As an individual difference-making factor, behavioral workstyle preferences, for example, are extensively integrated into the model (Kerns, 2016c). Also, situational context, as it relates to aligning with organizational issues being faced, is an important consideration to understanding the framework (Johns, 2006; Kerns, 2015b). Competencies, as a key dimension of leadership, are also integrally connected to various components presented in the current

framework (Kerns & Ko, 2014; Yukl, 2012). In addition, the leadership dimension of results management is addressed in the current model (Kerns, 2015a; Mumford & Barrett, 2013). This dimension underscores the importance of seeing thoughts/ideas as ultimately producing wise, desired outcomes that have practical utility. Peterson and Seligman (2004) remind us that wisdom is the product of knowledge and experience and is more than the accumulation of information. Wisdom is the value-added application of knowledge, experience, and perhaps intuition to key topics and situations needing attention. It is an organizational asset to be nurtured and managed as part of leading the thought leadership process.

Resource management, as it relates to leadership and organizational effectiveness, is also connected to the current framework. The key resources of people, information, and time are especially relevant to this work. People need to be matched with the right work tasks to help execute the leading thought leadership process. (A more extensive review of the leader profile associated with implementing the leading thought leadership framework will be offered later.) Also, information needs to be accessed and converted to knowledge, which can then be utilized to produce potentially wise outcomes. Time is a resource that interacts with all organizational resources. In leading the thought leadership process, a leader needs to manage and allocate resources effectively.

Knowledge management has become a key consideration for organizations seeking to enhance competitiveness and performance, causing them to place increased attention on associated frameworks and practices (Bratianu, 2018; Hislop, 2013). Issues relating to international business, cultural dynamics, and organizational performance have helped intensify the focus on knowledge management (Dayan, Heisig, & Matos, 2017; Massingham & Massingham, 2014; Venkitachalam & Bosua, 2014). Numerous conceptual models addressing knowledge management have been offered in the extant literature ranging from more technically focused frameworks to those entertaining more process-oriented components such as capabilities, learning, and maturity of knowledge. These conceptual models have evolved from reviewing different types of

knowledge and presenting approaches to processing knowledge and, more recently, to considering more holistic views of organizational knowledge management that span diverse disciplines (Christopher & Tanwar, 2012; Denford, 2013; Elizi & Bamber, 2018; McAdam & McCreedy, 1999).

In practice, knowledge management attempts to pull together models and approaches to facilitate the flow of data, information, and knowledge between people in a timely manner to help them perform in ways that create organizational value (Birasnav, Goel, & Rastogi, 2012). Knowledge has been categorized in different ways, such as explicit or tacit (Brewer & Brewer, 2010). *Explicit knowledge* is codified, stored, easily shared, and found in sources such as manuals, reports, and databases, which require mechanical or technology retrieval devices. *Tacit knowledge* is personal; context-specific; and challenging to formulate, assemble, communicate, and share. Sources of tacit knowledge include personal experiences, historical understandings of events, and informal business processes and communications. It is highly individualistic and connected to intuition and perspectives relating to specific topics under consideration (Kakabadse, Kouzmin, & Kakabadse, 2001).

There is a difference between data, information, and knowledge, with knowledge being potentially more action oriented (Steyn, 2003). Knowledge can lead to informed decision making and wise value-added applications in an environment that values organizational wisdom. A culture in which tacit knowledge becomes explicit organizational knowledge more likely happens when leaders engage people in sharing their knowledge and capabilities at all organizational levels (Lifshitz-Assaf, 2017).

Further consider that wisdom-enhancing organizational cultures effectively manage data, information, and knowledge in ways that produce desired outcomes, including wise value-added applications (Christopher & Tanwar, 2012). On the next page, Figure 1 depicts these relationships as an organizational wisdom-creating chain.

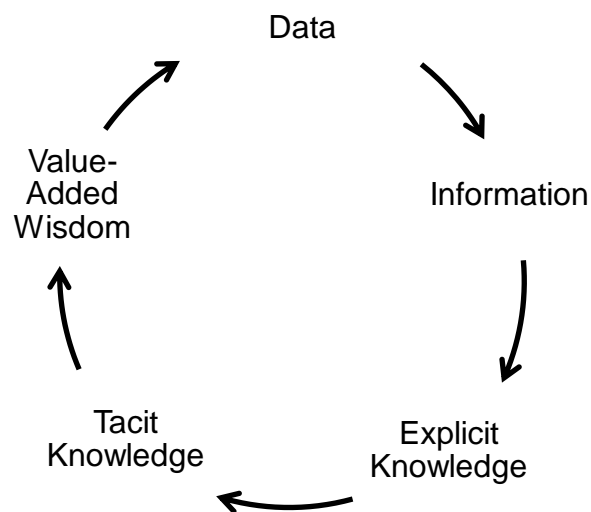


Figure 1. Organizational wisdom-creating chain

The wisdom-creating chain is implicitly embedded in the leading thought leadership framework. The leader facilitates the conversion of data, information, and knowledge into value-added wisdom by effectively managing the processes offered in the current framework. A key component in the process is the application of tacit knowledge to an important organization topic to yield wise, value-added outcomes. Wise decisions lead to wisdom-based outcomes that help create and sustain organizational wisdom. This knowledge application process makes tacit knowledge explicit, impactful, and relevant to addressing key organizational challenges, opportunities, and issues. Figure 2 on the next page depicts the dynamic interplay between tacit knowledge relevance and impact when addressing important organizational topics.



Application Impact (AI)	Low R + High AI	High R + High AI
	Q1	Q4
	Q2	Q3
	Low R + Low AI	High R + Low AI
	Tacit Knowledge Relevance (R)	

Figure 2. Tacit knowledge relevance and application impact  
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The tacit knowledge relevance and application impact model identifies four possible outcomes when considering important organizational topics for thought leadership processing:

- **Q4 High Relevance + High Application Impact:** In this quadrant, wisdom is being created. Important topics are addressed in ways that produce high-value added outcomes. This is the “Wisdom Creation” quadrant.
- **Q3: High Relevance + Low Application Impact:** In this quadrant, tacit knowledge of high relevance to important topics produces low application impact. This sector represents missed opportunities in leading the thought leadership value-creation process. This is the “Lost Opportunity” quadrant.
- **Q2: Low Relevance + Low Application Impact:** In this quadrant, tacit knowledge with low relevance is being ineffectively applied to important organizational topics. This is the “Missed the Mark” quadrant.
- **Q1: Low Relevance + High Application Impact:** In this quadrant, tacit knowledge of low relevance is being applied to important organizational topics for high impact. This can be thought of as the “So What” quadrant, since impact is made in areas of little relevance to the important topic under consideration.

The idea of leading thought leadership as a dynamic process and organizational resource calls upon many facets of leadership. With this broader perspective, beyond a focus on the individual thought leader, thought leadership holds additional promise for managerial leaders and their organizations. It can likely be more fully understood, managed, and leveraged by leaders in ways that engage the overall organization to yield desired results.

### **Practice-Oriented Framework**

A practice-oriented framework that addresses leading thought leadership will most likely support organizational leaders in putting value-added ideas/thoughts into practice. The author has developed an integrated managerial leadership system<sup>2</sup> that includes a leading thought leadership framework with six phases. This framework has been applied in numerous settings, including work organizations, executive education, and applied research projects.

The six phases illuminated in the framework are (I) identifying and assessing; (II) acquiring information, analyzing, generating thoughts/ideas, and targeting topics; (III) promoting and operationalizing; (IV) organizing, optimizing, and executing; (V) sustaining standards and ensuring quality; and (VI) indexing and assessing outcomes/impacts (see Figure 3). The framework reflects a review of relevant literature, applied research, and practice by the author and his colleagues. These efforts have yielded the following observations that serve to support the framework offered in this article.

- Thought leadership frequently focuses on the individual rather than the broader organization and/or how organizational leaders can drive the process of thought leadership as a resource.
- Through effective leading of thought leadership, a culture of wisdom can likely be created and sustained. Although managerial leaders understand

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<sup>2</sup> While it is beyond the scope of the current article, this system of managerial leadership strives to provide practitioners, applied researchers, and teachers with an integrated approach to viewing and understanding leadership. The system brings together several streams of leadership study and research that have been offered over the past 100 years.

the importance of organizational culture, it is challenging for many to operationalize the culture–wisdom relationship (Birasnav et al., 2012; Knapp & Yu, 1999).

- Competitive advantage, performance, and well-being are connected to knowledge management and leading thought leadership (Bourdeau, 2003; Kerns, 2018).
- Linking the work to be done with peoples' behavioral workstyle preferences is integral to effectively leading the thought leadership process (Kerns, 2016c).
- Situational context matters when identifying, assessing, and managing the thought leadership process (Johns, 2006; Kerns, 2015b).
- Wisdom-based performance with practical utility and results management plays a key role in leading thought leadership (Kerns, 2015a; Massingham & Massingham, 2014; Ragab & Arisha, 2013).
- Knowledge and wisdom are present and available to be communicated throughout an organization (Birasnav et al., 2012).
- Leading thought leadership is a human capital intensive endeavor (Takahashi, Indulska, & Steen, 2018; Tenhorst, Lusher, Bolton, Elsum, & Wang, 2018; Tortoriello, Reagans, & McEvily, 2012).
- Knowledge management conceptual frameworks have been extensively considered to help applied researchers, knowledge management professionals, and business analysts (Barley et al., 2018; Elezi & Bamber, 2018; Heisig, 2009).
- Wisdom can be a value-added outcome of effectively leading thought leadership (Peterson & Seligman, 2004).
- Profiling key leader behavioral skill areas is important in the selection, evaluation, and development of leaders (Kerns & Ko, 2014).
- Self-awareness and situational awareness interact throughout the process of leading thought leadership.
- High-impact communicating, decisive problem solving, and persuasiveness are key leader practices for effectively driving the thought leadership process (Collyer, 2017; Kerns, 2016b).

- Managing and negotiating conflict on the interpersonal level is connected to employee well-being and performance. Situational conflict management is integral to successfully driving the leading thought leadership process (Kerns, 2016c).
- An understanding and appreciation of wisdom as a valued outcome of the thought leadership process is important. Recognizing the differences between data, information, knowledge, and value-added wisdom is also a key consideration (Christopher & Tanwar, 2012; Seligman, 2011; Steyn, 2003; Walsh, 2015).
- There is likely a connection between leadership, attachment theory, and thought leadership, especially as it relates to the leader of the thought leadership process being seen as a wiser, stronger caregiver (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016).
- There is a paucity of extant applied research and practitioner-friendly approaches to leading thought leadership.
- Business education has a role to play in helping learners become leaders of thought leadership and knowledge management (Brewer & Brewer, 2010; Roth & Lee, 2009).
- Decisiveness contributes to achieving desired outcomes and competitiveness by helping leaders to more rapidly generate, assemble, and communicate knowledge and wisdom (Kerns, 2016a).

Phase I	Phase II	Phase III	Phase IV	Phase V	Phase VI
<b>Identifying and Assessing</b>	→ <b>Acquiring Information, Analyzing, Generating Thoughts/Ideas, and Targeting Topics</b>	→ <b>Promoting and Operationalizing</b>	→ <b>Organizing, Optimizing, and Executing</b>	→ <b>Sustaining Standards and Ensuring Quality</b>	→ <b>Indexing and Assessing Outcomes/ Impacts</b>
Positioning thought leadership as an organizational resource and process to be facilitated and managed Identifying topics to be managed (challenges, opportunities, problems/ issues) Assessing leader profile Assessing situational context and spheres of influence Considering resource requirements and alignments	Accessing “just right” amount of quality information Brainstorming Establishing targeting criteria Conducting appropriate analyses Using decisive problem-solving and collaboration to target thought(s)/ ideas to move topics forward Identify desired outcomes Assembling acquired knowledge	Persuasively promoting key “thoughts” and “ideas” to stakeholders and resource providers Experimenting with ideas and developing them to work in practice Developing prototypes, models, and frameworks Acquiring needed resources Tracking communication impacts	Setting up systems Making things happen Maintaining results/outcome focus Scheduling and planning Producing agreed-upon outcomes at optimal levels Delivering outcomes on time to agreed-upon standards	Checking the detailed aspects of work Inspecting standards and procedures Negotiating needed adjustments with stakeholders Ensuring quality controls are in place Maintaining standards and systems	Tracking outcomes/ results including perspective/ wisdom gained Providing performance feedback Evaluating outcomes for intended and unplanned consequences Adapting for continuous improvement Identifying other topics to address needs Encouraging continued wisdom-guided performance

Figure 3. The leading thought leadership framework  
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When a leader has an integrated understanding of thought leadership as a systematic and dynamic process, he or she can more likely manage and optimize thought leadership as a resource. By doing so, a leader will likely facilitate more value-added perspectives and solutions to important opportunities, challenges, and problems that are being considered.

## Leading Thought Leadership Framework Phases

The leading thought leadership framework contains six phases, which are reviewed below. Key content areas, actions, and behavioral outcomes associated with each phase are briefly discussed. The implementation of the framework is typically facilitated by an executive coach or trusted advisor who helps a leader implement the framework.

**Phase I: Identifying and Assessing.** The starting point in Phase I is having the leader position thought leadership as an organizational process and resource. The notion that thought leadership is greatly influenced by the factors surrounding specific topics being addressed is stressed. Also, the point that this is a dynamic and interactive process is communicated. The concept of making value-added contributions and building organizational wisdom is offered. Identifying challenges, opportunities, and issues that could benefit from an infusion of ideas is integral to the process. These topics may relate to strategic issues or be more operations oriented. Thought leadership may address topics at any level within the organization. They may also vary in importance and level of urgency. The process is advanced when the leader has effective linking skills to match the appropriate people with key organizational topics needing to be addressed. Linking skills include such behaviors as listening; allocating work; and setting realistic, yet stretching, goals.

In addition to linking with needed resources to advance the thought leadership process in this phase, a leader needs to consider the alignments between key areas in the organization and how they advance the thought leadership process or perhaps diminish the effort. At the onset, the topic and situation being considered for thought leadership processing in Phases I through VI need to have a reasonable chance of being advanced for further consideration. The potential topic under consideration also needs to be aligned with the experience and expertise of the individuals who will be involved in the process. The leader who will be leading the overall thought leadership process will be assessed against a behavioral profile to identify potential areas for development. The behavioral outcomes for Phase I are

- effectively positioning thought leadership to individuals and groups,
- identifying key topics to consider,
- assessing leaders for fit with the leader profile,
- identifying key situational context issues, and
- identifying potential.

**Phase II: Acquiring Information, Analyzing, Generating Thoughts/Ideas, and Targeting Topics.** Accessing sufficient quality information to help formulate ideas and thoughts on the topic at hand is an important part of this phase. Information needs to be analyzed and converted to knowledge to prepare for making decisions about where to focus efforts in addressing the challenge, opportunity, or issue. Thoughts and ideas on what to do need to be considered and prioritized using a set of agreed-upon criteria for topic target selection. It is also during this phase that the desired outcomes of the leading thought leadership process are established. The behavioral outcomes for Phase II are

- targeting important topics,
- identifying clear desired outcomes, and
- acquiring high-quality information.

**Phase III: Promoting and Operationalizing.** Once the target areas are selected in Phase II, effective persuasion is used to promote/sell the idea(s) to key stakeholders and other potential sources of resources. When sufficient support has been gained from key stakeholders and others, experimentation can begin or be expanded. This typically involves experimenting with the ideas that have been put forth to develop them to work in practice. This may include developing prototypes, models, and/or frameworks to determine their utility for practice. Critical to this phase is the acquisition of needed resources to sustain the process and ultimately deliver the desired results. The behavioral outcomes for Phase III are

- effectively promoting thoughts and ideas,
- effectively experimenting with ideas to make them work in practice,
- developing prototypes effectively and efficiently,

- acquiring needed resources, and
- using proactive, high-impact communication.

**Phase IV: Organizing, Optimizing, and Executing.** This phase is about making things happen. Systems and processes are put in place and/or fine-tuned to optimize outcomes. A key element during this phase is planning and holding people accountable for delivering agreed-upon outcomes on time and to standards. The behavioral outcomes for Phase IV are

- installing needed systems and procedures effectively and efficiently,
- producing deliverables on time, and
- producing deliverables to quality standards.

**Phase V: Sustaining Standards and Ensuring Quality.** This phase focuses on checking on the details of the work. It involves upholding and maintaining the quality standards and guidelines that have been put in place. This phase helps ensure that the performance infrastructure that has been put in place is upheld and maintained unless otherwise indicated. The behavioral outcomes for Phase V are

- effectively auditing systems and procedures and
- maintaining quality standards

**Phase VI: Indexing and Assessing Outcomes/Impacts.** Throughout the various phases of the process, performance and outcomes—both intended and unplanned—need to be indexed. It is vital that performance feedback be given to the people engaged in the process. Adaptability and an attitude of continuous improvement need to prevail throughout the process, especially during Phase VI. It is also vital that additional ideas/thoughts be formulated and put forward based on the knowledge gained and lessons learned during all phases of the process. Wisdom-based, value-added contributions also need to be indexed and documented to help advance the efforts to create and sustain a culture in which thought leadership is seen as a valued process and resource. The behavioral outcomes for Phase VI are



- regularly and accurately indexing results,
- measuring wisdom as an outcome,
- identifying unplanned outcomes, and
- proposing additional topics for thought leadership processing based on knowledge gained and lessons learned.

## **Leading Thought Leadership: Leader Profile**

A leader's efforts in implementing the six-phase framework are advanced when he or she effectively displays a set of key behavioral competencies. Ten specific behavioral skill areas, when combined, create a leader profile that can help leaders assess themselves when leading thought leadership. This profile can also be used by executive coaches and trusted advisors to help leaders in their implementation of the framework. The 10 behavioral skill areas making up the profile are briefly reviewed below.

### **Self-Awareness and Situational Awareness**

Leaders need to be aware of what they bring to the thought leadership process. In order to be effective, a leader must have a clear understanding of his or her strengths and weaknesses as they relate to managing the various phases in the process. This includes having an accurate view of how he or she performs in each of the leader profile areas summarized in Table 1.

In addition, a leader must have situational awareness of key spheres of influence that may help guide which topics to pursue during Phase II. Kerns (2015b) developed a practitioner-oriented framework for leaders to identify the spheres of influence that impact them and their organization. This framework identifies the following four spheres of influence:

**Core organizational identity.** An organization's core identity offers an understanding of the attributes that define the organization and set it apart from other entities in terms of purpose, values, and guiding principles. Well-being is enhanced when the individual leader's core identity is aligned with his or her organization's identity. Key topics for thought leadership processing may include,

for example, ways to effectively communicate values and foster them, living them in daily work.

**Internal Environment.** The internal environment relates to the organization's strategic direction, operational focus, and linkages with resources. The organizational culture, people, and structure, as well as systems and processes, are also contained within this sphere of influence. Managerial leaders need to discern what is going on regarding these elements within the internal organizational environment and how they may be individually and/or collectively influencing the specific situation and topic under consideration. Enhancing organizational wisdom by creating and sustaining a culture that values and effectively manages the thought leadership process is often a key topic pursued when using the current framework.

**Transactional Environment.** Transactional environment influences are derived from interactions occurring on a periodic basis. Organizational stakeholders who do business with an organization and/or are regularly impacted by the enterprise are found in this sphere of influence, as are customers, suppliers, and competitors. Two often-overlooked elements within this sphere of influence are local and/or regional communities in which the enterprise is located, and significant others such as family, extended family, and others connected to an organization's workforce. Organizational policy makers need to take this sphere of influence into account—especially employees' significant others—when considering well-being in the leading thought leadership process (Kerns, 2018). This observation is supported by the knowledge of how well-being levels can affect areas outside of the workplace.

**Extended External Environment.** The extended external environment contains important influences that are beyond the direct control of the leader. These influences include such areas as government legislation, demographic changes, and the economy. Other macro-level factors may include technology and societal lifestyle preferences. This sphere of influence has more impact on leaders in some industry sectors than in others, as it relates to their efforts to impact thought leadership productivity levels in their organizations.

Both self-awareness and situational awareness are needed by the leader throughout each phase in the current framework but especially during Phases I (identifying and assessing) and II (acquiring Information, analyzing, generating thoughts/ideas and targeting topics).

### **High-Impact Communication**

Throughout the six phases, the need for high-impact communication is essential. High-impact communication is attained when the leader's intent has the desired impact on others on a consistent basis (Kerns, 2017). During Phase I (identifying and assessing), when the leader positions the idea of thought leadership as an organizational resource and value-added process, high-impact communication is vital. To ensure that the leader's intent is having the desired impact, a leader needs to

- speak clearly,
- recognize what is in his or her perceptual filter regarding the topic being considered,
- receiver-orient his or her message and understand what is in the receiver's perceptual filter regarding the topic being considered,
- send a coherent message wherein "what" is being said matches "how" it is being delivered,
- actively listen to others, and
- be open to feedback from others regarding whether or not his or her intended message has the desired feedback.

### **Decisive Problem Solving**

Decisive problem solving occurs when desired outcomes are achieved in agreed-upon timeframes using the right amount of quality information. This practice is especially relevant during Phases I (identifying and assessing) and II (acquiring information, analyzing, generating thoughts/ideas, and targeting tactics). This is when criteria are established to prioritize topics or thoughts/ideas to pursue based upon the best available information. The leader needs to weigh time considerations with the quality of information acquired at any point during the

process. In the end, decisive problem solving is judged by whether or not desired outcomes have been achieved, as indexed during Phase VI (indexing and assessing outcomes/impacts). It is important to recognize that decisive problem solving does not always mean making quick decisions. Leading the thought leadership process includes managing the delicate balance between the desire for quality information and time pressures to achieve desired outcomes on schedule (Kerns, 2016a).

### **Linking Resources**

Leading thought leadership involves the ability to link resources, especially people, throughout the six phases. Once a topic has been targeted, an individual or individuals need to be identified and recruited to more fully study the topic and bring relevant and useful information to bear. The acquired information is used to further support or dilute the strength of the topic/idea being targeted. Once the topic and champion(s) are matched, the leader needs to identify and acquire resources to promote, operationalize, and help the champion and others move forward to achieve desired results. Throughout the process, the leader is continuously linking work requirements during Phases II through V with key peoples' work preferences (Li & Holsapple, 2018).

Linking resources throughout the process calls upon the following practices to be effectively executed:

- managing teamwork,
- ensuring alignments,
- internally managing key interfaces,
- managing external stakeholder interfaces, and
- allocating resources efficiently and effectively.

The above practices are ongoing throughout all phases of the framework and closely connected to understanding and managing work preferences.

### **Understanding and Managing Behavioral Workstyle Preferences**

Managing workstyle preferences is integral to leading the thought leadership process. Phases II through V call for the leader to effectively match people preferences with the work to be done. The work of Margerison and McCann (1990) as well as Belbin (1993; 1994) relating to types of work and behavioral workstyle preferences is relevant. This research involved the extensive review of what individuals and teams actually do at work. More specifically, Margerison and McCann studied types of work and individual behavioral workstyle preferences. The types of work framework emerging from Margerison and McCann's research included the following areas:

- Promoting: Seeking new opportunities and persuading others.
- Developing: Assessing and testing the application value of new models.
- Organizing: Putting in place methods and means to make things function.
- Producing: Delivering/completing task(s) consistently.
- Inspecting: Reviewing and auditing processes and systems.
- Maintaining: Upholding standards and systems.
- Advising: Acquiring and sharing data/information.
- Innovating: Creating and considering new ways of thinking and doing.

Understanding types of work leads to connecting work functions with individual behavioral characteristics at work. Margerison and McCann (1990) and Belbin (1993; 1994) have shown that individuals who prefer certain types of work seem to display similar behavioral characteristics. For example, individuals who like to "promote" tend to be persuasive, while those who like to "inspect" at work seem to be more detail oriented. Margerison and McCann's work produced the following behavioral workstyle preferences:

- Explorer–promoter: verbally expressive, outgoing, persuasive
- Assessor–developer: idea developer, organizer, pragmatic
- Thruster–organizer: decisive, confronter, logical
- Concluder–producer: finisher, present-oriented, efficient
- Controller–inspector: detail-oriented, accurate, meticulous

- Upholder–maintainer: loyal, consensus-seeker, patient
- Reporter–adviser: supportive, researcher, knowledge seeker
- Creator–innovator: flexible, intuitive, idea generator

Managerial leaders are encouraged to identify key action areas that will enhance their execution of the practice of understanding and managing workstyle preferences. Five key action areas of general applicability for the purpose of understanding and managing workstyle preferences would include

- understanding the relationship between the nature and types of work, and behavioral workstyle preferences;
- assessing individual and team behavioral workstyle preferences;
- understanding the key type of work functions needed to complete work assignments/projects as well as specify key job responsibilities;
- matching individuals and/or team members with the nature and types of work to be done, along with accurate job profiles;
- considering ways to enhance the thought leadership process continuously by managing the work in Phases II through V in concert with people's behavioral workstyle preferences.

These five practices reflect the research and conceptualizations relating to behavioral workstyle preferences. They can especially help the leader in leading Phases II through V in the current framework.

### **Openness to Change**

While individual leaders differ in their openness to change, this is an important area in moving the thought leadership process forward to achieve desired outcomes. The degree to which a leader displays openness to new experiences and new ways of doing things will impact the implementation of the six-phase process. The behavioral characteristic of being open to change is connected to the individual difference factor of personality. Individuals vary on their openness to change along a continuum from low to high. Leading the thought leadership process is advanced when the leader displays at least a moderate level of willingness to change and behavioral flexibility when dealing with people and

situations. In practice, there are a number of ways to assess a leader's propensity for change and openness to new experiences. The author uses the WorkPlace Big Five Profile™ along with open-ended questioning to assess this personality factor (Kerns, 2017).

Open-mindedness is needed across all phases in the framework. Flexibility is required for identifying and prioritizing challenges and issues to address. Brainstorming sessions, for example, can yield optimal results when they are conducted in an open and inviting way. This helps generate thoughts and ideas surrounding key topics. Experimenting with and developing new ideas are facilitated when the leader sets a tone of openness. Executing agreed-upon plans also calls for a leader to demonstrate a willingness to be flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances.

### **Persuasiveness**

The ability to promote ideas and thought leadership projects to key stakeholders is integral to effectively leading this process. Persuasion helps “sell” the idea as well as assist in acquiring resources to operationalize the thoughts and put them into practice. This behavioral skill is also critical in creating and sustaining key linkages and alignments as the process unfolds from inception to delivering desired outcomes.

The field of social psychology has extensively studied persuasion and offers three key takeaways that can be applied by leaders when leading the thought leadership process (Cialdini, 2006). First, a leader needs to have leadership *credibility* among stakeholders. Stakeholders recognize when a leader has proven experience in effectively leading people and situations to produce results. The nature of this credibility is not necessarily expertise relating to the topic or idea being explored and developed, but is more closely related to a proven track record of managing people and processes. Second, a leader needs to offer a *reasonable approach* to leading a thought leadership process. Third, a leader needs to show *emotion* appropriate to the situation. The emotion can be positive in support of actions and/or negative as a premonition of potentially undesirable things to come if the process is not actively engaged in by others.

**Managing and Negotiating Conflict**

Interpersonal conflict in the workplace is one of the largest sources of occupational job stress (Spector & Bruk-Lee, 2008) and is connected to reduced employee physical well-being and psychological health (Hershcovis & Barling, 2010). The author's fieldwork and applied research in client organizations in which managerial leaders practice effective conflict management support the value of leader competency in this area when leading thought leadership efforts. This is especially relevant to the current framework, in which the leader is managing diverse behavioral workstyle preferences, making important resource allocations, and dealing with differing viewpoints/ideas in such matters as thought leadership topic selection.

A leader who is identifying, assessing, and managing elements in the thought leadership process benefits by using effective situational conflict management practices. In applying this behavioral skill, leaders should understand that situational conflict management involves

- anticipating and proactively handling potential conflict situations;
- describing conflict in terms of observable behavior;
- assessing the source of conflict;
- delivering the conflict-resolution negotiating style/approach that is most effective in a particular situation;
- showing behavioral flexibility in applying the various negotiation styles/approaches across situations; and
- reflecting on conflict-resolution episodes/negotiations to determine what was learned.

**Appreciating Wisdom**

It is important for the leader to recognize and appreciate wisdom as an organizational asset. It is desirable that outcomes indexed in Phase VI (indexing and assessing outcomes/impacts) include those achieved through wisdom-based performance. Wise outcomes are the result of individuals and/or teams combining their knowledge, experience, and intuition in a coordinated way to



arrive at wisdom. The appreciation of wisdom and perspective helps leaders listen to others, evaluate what they say, and offer or receive wise advice. Wisdom-based outcomes are especially valuable products yielded by effectively leading the thought leadership process. These types of results help build organizational wisdom.

### **Focusing on Desirable Outcomes**

A key behavioral skill area for a leader is to be able to identify the most important areas/topics to focus on that can be influenced. Targeting areas of high importance that can be affected is a priority. This contributes to achieving desired results, which is a core dimension of effective leadership (Kerns, 2015a).

Phase II (acquiring information, analyzing, generating thoughts/ideas, and targeting topics) includes helping key stakeholders focus on the importance of identifying clear desired outcomes. This aspect of Phase II ensures that the acquisition of information and the generation of thoughts/ideas are done in the context of achieving clear desired outcomes. Without this focus, ideas and thoughts for targeting may drift to less important areas offering less impact. While there are numerous softer, more people-oriented skills required of leaders, they are all applied with the intent to achieve mutually agreed-upon results. Serendipity also can play a role in the process when unexpected outcomes are achieved and savored as successes or serve as learning lessons if they were considered setbacks during the process.

Taken together, the 10 behavioral skill areas relating to leading the thought leadership process discussed above provide a useful profile for assessing a leader's current performance and potential and as a basis for creating leadership development programs. Table 1 summarizes and defines the 10 skill areas in the profile.

**Table 1: Leading Thought Leadership: Leader Profile**

Behavioral Skill	Definition/Observations
Self-awareness and situational awareness	Involves a leader knowing himself or herself in important practice areas and recognizing what is going on around him or her
High-impact communication	When a leader's intended message has the desired impact
Decisive problem-solving	Reaching desired outcomes by using the right amounts of quality information within reasonable timeframes
Linking resources	Bringing needed resources together and efficiently and effectively managing them to advance direction and operational focus
Understanding and managing behavioral workstyle preferences	Matching the work to be done with the people having the most appropriate workstyle preferences to do the work
Openness to change	Showing open-mindedness to new experiences and different ways of doing things
Persuasiveness	"Selling" others on ideas effectively and acquiring resources with credibility, a reasonable approach, and appropriate emotion
Managing and negotiating conflict	Identifying conflicts, assessing differences, and using situationally appropriate styles to resolve issues
Appreciating wisdom	Understanding and appreciating the difference between information, knowledge, and perspective/wisdom
Focusing on desirable outcomes	Targeting the most important areas for change that can be influenced to achieve results

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## Some Challenges

Evidence accrued from practice, applied research and a review of relevant literature highlights several challenges facing organizations and their leaders

when addressing the topic of leading thought leadership to produce value-added results. Some of these challenges follow.

### **Establishing Clarity and Credibility of Direction**

Leading thought leadership requires having a clear and credible direction on at least two organizational fronts. First, to create and sustain an organizational culture characterized by thought leadership and wisdom, a strategic message needs to be communicated across the organization by top management. This communication needs to reference the organizational definition previously provided for leader-driven thought leadership: identifying, assessing, and managing key topics and resources to achieve wise value-added outcomes. People need to know that organizational leadership is committed to addressing important topics and tapping the talents of their people and other resources to address these areas. Second, when addressing specific topics, direction needs to be clear and credible. The individual or group championing the thought leadership effort needs to be clear about the purpose, process, and desired outcomes. Across the six phases, people need to see that the thought leadership efforts have directional clarity.

Beyond directional clarity, the content of the leader's message, whether strategic or more operationally focused, needs to be seen as credible by those involved in the process (Holmes & Parker, 2017). *Credibility* can be equated to believability of the direction being offered for the topic being considered (Graham, 2009; Miller, 2015). The leader is challenged to effectively match individuals with topics in which they have credibility and that they can address with clarity. Establishing a clear and credible direction

- enhances the operational focus, especially during Phases II through V in the framework;
- helps guide the allocation of resources, especially people, to achieve desired outcomes;
- enhances well-being, since individuals, groups, and the overall organization know where things are going; and

- ultimately enhances performance of individuals, groups, and organizations.

### **Shaping Operational Focus**

Resources need to be focused on the areas that are most important and can be most influenced. This is especially essential during Phase II of the framework when challenges, opportunities, and issues are being targeted for further exploration and development during Phases III through VI.

It is important that criteria be established to guide which topics are targeted in the leading thought leadership process. Without this focus, attention may be diverted away from the areas that hold the most value-added potential. Two essential criteria for discerning the areas with the highest potential for adding value are “importance to the organization” and “ability to influence.”

### **Engaging Various Work Functions**

Leaders managing the thought leadership process are also challenged by the need to ensure that the following work functions are engaged in during Phases II through V:

- acquiring data and information,
- generating innovative/creative ideas,
- promoting and persuading,
- assessing and developing,
- organizing,
- producing,
- controlling and inspecting details, and
- maintaining standards and systems.

In turn, the leader needs to match peoples’ workstyle preferences with the work functions or work to be done. This challenge underscores the behavioral breadth of skills needed during the thought leadership process. Juxtaposed to this observation is a common misconception that thought leadership resides in one person who typically is a creator–innovator and can be relied on to generate innovative ideas on topics under consideration. The challenge here in terms of

managing thought leadership is that the generation of ideas (Phase II) is only one of the work functions and behavioral work preferences needed to fully execute the six-phase process.

### Managing Resources

To direct and focus resources assumes that resources are available. Throughout all six phases, leaders are challenged to acquire, allocate, and manage resources, especially human capital assets, effectively and efficiently. Leaders can be evaluated based on how effective and efficient they are in managing people, money, information, time, and capital assets. Figure 4 depicts the relationship between effectiveness and efficiency in managing resources.

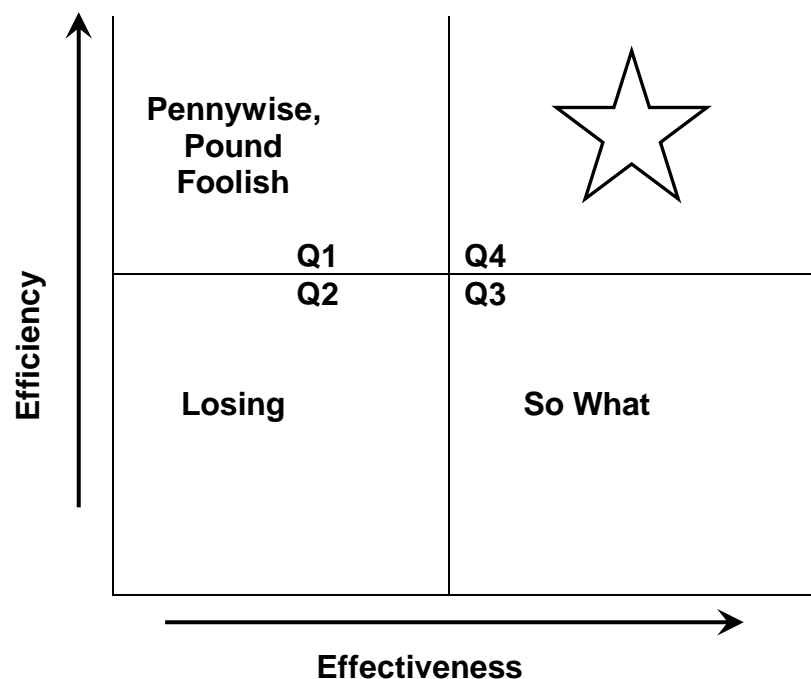


Figure 4. Managing resources: Effectiveness–efficiency matrix

- **Q1: Pennywise, Pound Foolish:** This quadrant includes leaders who efficiently manage resources but do not typically achieve the desired outcomes.
- **Q2: Losing:** This quadrant contains leaders who are losing ground in competitiveness by neither achieving desired outcomes nor being efficient in managing resources.

- **Q3: So What:** In this quadrant, leaders are achieving desired outcomes but doing so inefficiently.
- **Q4: The Star:** This quadrant represents leaders who are typically effective in achieving desired outcomes while also managing resources efficiently.

In judging leaders, especially in the context of leading thought leadership efforts, it is important to consider their ability to optimize resources. Optimization, which comes into play during Phase IV (organizing, optimizing, and executing) finds a leader making investments in resources that may not boost effectiveness in the short term. In these instances, losers can sometimes become stars if the investments in optimization have been wise ones yielding value-added outcomes. Wisdom-based decisions and performance can lead to wise value-added outcomes over the longer term. The challenge for organizations and their leaders is to balance time as a resource with investment in other resources, with the hope that losers will become stars. Operationalizing and optimizing the ideas that are generated in the leading thought leadership process is especially challenging when it comes to wisely allocating resources.

### **Managing Alignments**

Leading thought leadership is advanced by ensuring that key alignments are strong. First, an organization needs to have vertical and horizontal alignment regarding peoples' commitment to participating in efforts to create and sustain a culture characterized by wisdom. Organizational wisdom is a desired outcome of effectively leading thought leadership. Leadership needs to be present at all levels of the organization so that wise decisions and value-added outcomes are aligned around strategic and operational topics. Leaders are challenged to effectively communicate across organizational levels and cross-functionally to ensure that people are aligned with the six phases of the leading thought leadership process as it is being implemented.

Second, within specific projects or teams, leaders are challenged to position and align the six phases of the leading thought leadership framework. Individuals and teams need to be in alignment with the challenges, opportunities, and issues

being addressed and engage in each of the six phases as needed and appropriate. Efforts to put the leading thought leadership framework into practice need to be effectively planned, positioned and aligned to help ensure success.

To help leaders assess various key alignments, the author has found graphic scaling to be an effective method (Aiken, 1996, Van Dick, 2016). In this approach, the leader might ask members participating in the thought leadership process to what extent they are aligned with the topic being addressed and the specified desired outcomes. For both alignment queries, individuals can rate their perceptions using the sample graphic scale in Figure 5.

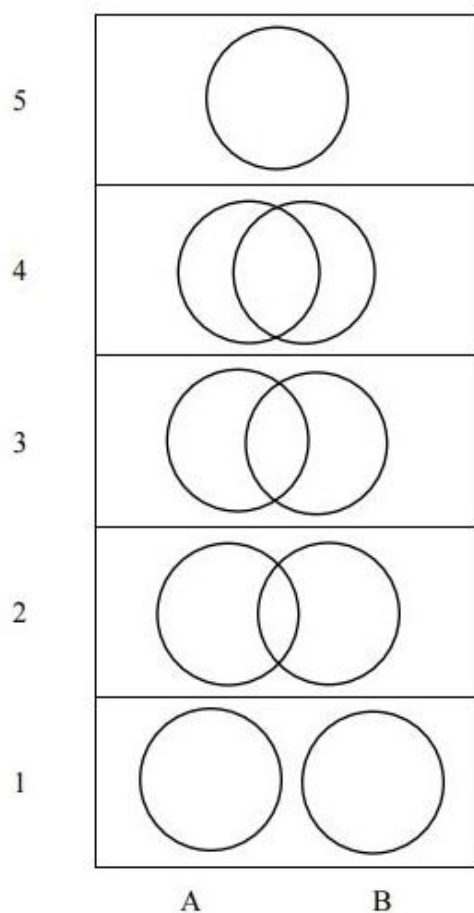


Figure 5. Sample graphic rating scale for assessing alignments. Adapted from "Organizational Identification," by R. Van Dick, in J. P. Meyer (Ed.), *Handbook of Employee Commitment* (p. 109), 2016, Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar. Copyright 2016 by Edward Elgar.

Respondents can rate and discuss their perceptions of how their thinking is aligned with both the topic being addressed and the specified desired outcomes.

This process has proven to be a useful springboard for stimulating additional conversation and ideas on specific areas relating to alignments.

### **Developing Practitioner Friendly Frameworks**

The development of practice-oriented, leader-driven, thought leadership frameworks is in its infancy. While there are numerous conceptual frameworks that address knowledge management, opportunities remain for practitioner-minded scholars and practitioners to individually or collectively develop evidence-based models. In these efforts, it would be especially valuable for authors to integrate organizational wisdom enhancement into their formulations. It would also be of value to focus on the leadership function in the process rather than on one individual thought leader. As revealed in the current framework, the process of thought leadership encompasses more than a single individual. Instead, it is a multifaceted process that includes, for example, matching work functions with participants' workstyle preferences. The current framework supports the notion that thought leadership is a process and organizational resource that needs to be managed to produce desired organizational outcomes, including wisdom.

Going forward, to meet the challenge of infusing organizations with value-added knowledge and wise outcomes when addressing important issues, leaders could benefit from having additional practice-oriented frameworks available for referencing. This challenge may be best addressed by practitioners of knowledge management and other organizational leaders collaborating with applied researchers. This type of collaboration may help integrate existing conceptual models with more practice-oriented frameworks that include such components as behavioral workstyle preferences in their approach.

### **Assessing and Developing Thought Leadership Leaders**

In moving beyond the notion that thought leadership is exclusively an individual endeavor, there is a pressing challenge to identify what it takes to effectively lead thought leadership in an organizational setting. To build a thought leadership culture that yields wise, value-added outcomes, leaders will need to be identified, assessed, and developed. This challenge will need to be addressed by



developing a profile of the key behavioral skill areas and practices that enhance a leader's effectiveness at leading thought leadership as a process. A key component in the framework offered here is the assessment of a leader against a leader profile during Phase I (identifying and assessing). (See also Table 1: Leader Thought Leadership: Leader Profile).

The leader profile can be converted to a Likert-type rating scale to assess an individual against the selected profile items. These results can influence decisions about whether to invest in the development of an individual to become a leader in leading the thought leadership process. The establishment of an organizational culture that nurtures and produces wise, value-added outcomes will have leaders who can effectively lead this process. This challenge can be addressed by conducting practical and relevant assessments of leaders and offering development programs. These programs need to have a practice-oriented perspective on the process of leading thought leadership.

### **Managing Engagement**

There is increasing support for viewing workforce engagement as a competitive advantage for organizations (Christian, Garza, & Slaughter, 2011). Shuck and Herd (2012) also indicate that organizational leaders believe the development of employee engagement is a top priority.

Managerial leaders are challenged to identify key action areas that will build engagement. Five key action areas with applicability for managing engagement in the leading thought leadership process are

- modeling key engagement behaviors, including vigor/energy, dedication, and absorption;
- showing interest in employee development, learning, and well-being;
- managing work and job demands while recognizing and optimizing personal and job-related resources;
- encouraging the matching of skill levels with important and relevant challenges; and

- aligning individuals, groups, and the organization with creating and sustaining an organizational culture that is characterized by thought leadership and wisdom.

Managerial leaders have considerable influence on work engagement, including how it relates to leading thought leadership efforts. Given the importance and impact of engagement, leaders of thought leadership are challenged to apply proven practices for managing engagement to the practice-oriented framework offered in this article. As managerial leadership actions, including the five areas noted earlier, are applied to executing the leading thought leadership framework, a culture characterized by organizational wisdom will likely be enhanced.

### **Managing Behavioral Diversity**

Leading the thought leadership process requires an understanding of and skill in managing people with different personalities and behavioral workstyle preferences. When it comes to managing behavioral diversity, a leader's effectiveness is likely enhanced when he or she can recognize that individual differences play a key role at work, including how one leads the thought leadership process. Fabritius and Hagemann (2017) offer a neuroleadership perspective and warn that working in teams of people with similar mindsets and behavior preferences/dispositions can influence the brain to become complacent, causing performance to suffer and opportunities for innovation to be reduced. Managing behavioral diversity represents a challenge for leaders wanting to resourcefully lead the thought leadership process. People are an integral resource in this process and bring diverse behavioral profiles to the effort to produce organizational wisdom.

While there are many dimensions in which individuals and teams may differ behaviorally, behavioral workstyle preferences are most relevant to the leading thought leadership process offered in this article. As previously noted, matching the work to be done with peoples' workstyle preferences is integral to

successfully putting the leading thought leadership process into practice. Phases II through V call for the leader to make the following matches:

- **Phase II** involves acquiring and sharing data/information and generating ideas for considering new ways of thinking and doing. This type of work best matches knowledge seekers and innovators.
- **Phase III** involves promoting and persuading others as well as assessing and testing the application value of innovations/ideas/models. This type of work best matches promoters of ideas and idea developers.
- **Phase IV** involves putting into place methods and means to make things function and completing work tasks. This type of work best matches organizers and finishers when it comes to completing work.
- **Phase V** involves reviewing and auditing processes and systems as well as maintaining them. This type of work best matches maintainers who are detailed-oriented and accurate.

Making the best matches of work to peoples' preferences is a challenge for leaders. These matches also need to be made in the context of the opportunities, challenges, and/or issues being addressed as part of the thought leadership process.

### **Defining and Measuring Wisdom**

While wisdom has been pursued since the great civilizations of some 2,500 years ago, it was relatively neglected as an area for psychological exploration until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Walsh, 2015). Also, viewing wisdom as a value-added outcome in a business and organizational context is not common among practitioners and researchers. Yet, enhancing wisdom seems to be a laudable outcome for leaders. In fact, the process of thought leadership should yield wisdom as an outcome for organizations. The current framework values organizational wisdom (Phase VI) as a desired outcome of thought leadership.

However, it is challenging to define and measure wisdom. Wisdom has been defined from many perspectives (Kupers & Statler, 2008; Walsh, 2015). From a practice point of view, it is important that wisdom be operationally defined so that

it can be measured. Measuring wisdom also presents significant challenges because of the lack of definitional clarity (Bordeau, 2003; Ragab & Arisha, 2013). It is difficult to measure a concept without having a clear operational definition of the phenomena. The author and his colleagues have developed an operational definition of *wisdom* as the application of knowledge, experience, and, perhaps, intuition to address topics to achieve desirable outcomes. Wisdom adds value-added perspective to people and situations.

Within the context of the leading thought leadership process, wisdom is measured by key stakeholders' perceptions of the outcomes achieved. This is typically a two-part process when evaluating the achievement of desired outcomes during Phase VI (indexing and assessing outcomes/impacts). Various Likert-type scaling methods can be used to rate respondents' ratings and comments to the following two questions:

*Question 1: To what extent was this desired outcome reached? (Please rate and comment.)*

*Question 2: To what extent can this desired outcome be attributed to the knowledge, experience, and/or intuition of an individual and/or group/team? (Please rate and comment.)*

These two questions serve as springboards for assessing key stakeholders' perceptions of the leading thought leadership outcomes (Phase VI). Respondents are asked to be as specific as possible in their comments about what the value-added knowledge was and who contributed what to the outcome. Important themes often emerge from this broad qualitative assessment method, which can identify future topics for the leading thought leadership process.

## **Concluding Comments**

Leading thought leadership offers an opportunity for organizational leaders to apply the concept of thought leadership in practice using a framework that looks beyond individual thought leaders. Drawing upon relevant literature, applied research, and practice, this framework operationalizes a way for leaders to lead thought leadership as a process and organizational resource to be managed and

developed. This six-phase process considers key dimensions of leadership, knowledge management, and behavioral science in its formulation. The effective application of the framework to practice requires a set of behavioral competencies that can be assessed and developed. There are challenges associated with leading thought leadership in an organizational context, including providing direction, and operational focus as well as managing resources, alignments, engagement, and behavioral diversity. Defining and measuring wisdom as a value-added outcome also offers a challenge. Leading thought leadership as a process and resource will likely help organizations and their leaders enhance organizational wisdom and the related value-added outcomes associated with these efforts.

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Charles D. Kerns, PhD, MBA, is a professor of applied behavioral science at the Pepperdine Graziadio Business School who has nearly four decades of business, managerial leadership, teaching, and consulting experience. Through his private consulting firm, Corperformance, Inc., he has implemented leadership and organizational development programs and systems to help companies from many industries optimize their results. He is a trusted advisor to C-level executives and their teams. He joined the Pepperdine Graziadio Business School in 1980 as an adjunct faculty member, and since 2000 has been a member of the full-time faculty. He has also served as the associate dean for academic affairs. Dr. Kerns holds a Diplomate, ABPP, in both Industrial-Organizational Psychology and Organizational-Business Consulting Psychology. He earned his PhD from the University of Maryland. His research, publications, and work focus on helping managerial leaders and their organizations apply evidence-based behavioral science frameworks and tools to achieve high performance with high well-being. He can be reached at [charles.kerns@pepperdine.edu](mailto:charles.kerns@pepperdine.edu).

## The Emergent Phenomenology of Pink Triangle Memorials\*

Marnie Rorholm  
Gonzaga University

The very act of testifying to grotesque historical events such as the Holocaust, the memory of which has been actively repressed by survivors and the surrounding societies that have maintained negative attitudes toward those imprisoned, is a way of drawing public attention to the injustices done. To be rescued from oblivion, this “collective memory” must become part of the social framework. One such way is through “interruptive symbols” that act as a means of interrupting our present circumstances and preserve memories, especially those that may be radically transformative. This article will examine memorials to homosexual Holocaust victims through emergent and organizational changes over time. The purpose of this article is to explore Pink Triangle memorials through the lens of communities of practice and leadership identity and to study how leaders use the artifacts and rituals of interruptive symbols to influence shared meaning, mutual recognition, or collective memories in order to evoke dangerous memories and, eventually, ignite transformative change.

**Key words:** collective memory, communities of practice, Holocaust, interruptive symbol, leadership identity, organizational change, Pink Triangle, rituals

Not until the late 1980s did researchers begin to seriously explore the Nazi persecution of homosexuals, discovering that, of all the men arrested under the Nazi legislation, 10 to 15 thousand men had worn the Pink Triangle badge inside concentration camps (Heger, 1994). The pink color of the badges was intentional and served to diminish the masculinity of those who wore it within the context of Nazi heterosexism. Today, there is only a single Pink Triangle at the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site in Germany. However, on the other side of the world lies the Pink Triangle Park in San Francisco, California. There, the symbol has been embraced by LGBTQ individuals, not just as a reminder of the suffering of those during World War II, but also as a sign of alliance and empowerment. There are now 29 memorials to the Pink Triangle prisoners worldwide (Koymasky, 2016). Indeed, the Pink Triangle has clearly become one of the most widespread symbols of the new gay liberation movement.

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\*Rorholm, M. (2019). The emergent phenomenology of Pink Triangle memorials. *International Leadership Journal*, 11(1), 42–54.

Seifert (2003) explains that the very act of testifying to historical events, the memories of which have been actively repressed by survivors and the surrounding societies that have maintained negative attitudes toward homosexuality, is a way of drawing public attention to the injustices done. To be rescued from the oblivion, this “collective memory” must become part of the social framework (Halbwachs, 1980). One such way is through *interruptive symbols* that act as a means of interrupting our present circumstances and preserve memories, especially those that may be radically transformative (Jensen, 2002). The purpose of this article is to explore Pink Triangle memorials through the lens of communities of practice and leadership identity and to study how leaders use the artifacts and rituals of interruptive symbols to influence shared meaning, mutual recognition, or collective memories in order to evoke dangerous memories and, eventually, ignite transformative change.

### **Collective Memory and Rituals**

French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs (1980) designated the central function of a “collective memory” as a record of resemblances, wherein what has changed are the group’s relations or contacts with other groups. The function of the collective memory is to develop several aspects of one single content—that is, the various fundamental identity characteristics of the group itself (Halbwachs, 1980). In other words, collective memory is a shared identity characteristic of two different groups. In this case, shame over homosexuality is shared by Pink Triangle prisoners/survivors and the modern LGBTQ community. Two generations apart from each other, they both hold memories of the unspoken experience associated with shame. The theory is that individual memory (in this case, the unspoken experience associated with shame) is only preserved insofar as it becomes a part of the social framework. The symbol of the Pink Triangle, and the subsequent memorials built to it, make tolerance and acceptance part of that social framework. The “authors” of the collective memory, both concentration camp survivors and the modern LGBTQ community, are

compelled to try to find ways of bridging gaps that lie between present and historical events.

Weingart (2011) references two important constructs: dangerous memories and interruptive symbols. *Interruptive symbols* (such as the Pink Triangles) evoke dangerous memories (such as Nazi persecution), which, Weingart argues, make us aware of a reality that we often choose to ignore—usually, this means a revelatory realization will take place that creates an opportunity for improvement. Metz (2007) describes *dangerous memories* as those that challenge us to examine human history, re-evaluate our present circumstances, and call into question our future. The dangerous memory is the catalyst for transformation and liberation in modern LGBTQ communities. The past calls into question the present, and creates collective change for tolerance in the future.

The encounter between generations such as Holocaust survivors and the modern LGBTQ community is much more complex than the mere transmission of a heritage. It is an interlocking of identities, with all the conflicts and mutual dependencies this entails; by this interlocking, individual trajectories incorporate, in different ways, the history of practice (Wenger, 1998). The study of *generational encounters*, or of memorializing for generations past the original historical event, becomes a matter of locating regularities across such transactional processes, of specifying recurrent mechanisms, patterns, and sequences in meso-level “occasions” (Emirbayer, 1997, 296). This includes the design of memorials that incorporate interruptive symbols, historically and in a modern interpretation.

When members of a culture share a symbol system, or a set of values, we are in essence asserting that they share the potential space of a shared “could be” (Seligman, 2009, 1075), such as making tolerance and acceptance a part of the social framework. Ritual action, like visiting a memorial, provides a shared sense of empathy and creates a shared space where the communal “could be” becomes the basis of the ongoing experience. In ritual, we subject ourselves to given categories of order, and through stories of a common past, we can allow a projection of a shared future. A *community of practice* in this sense is actually a

community of destiny, which shares a past, but in which destiny spans both past and future. Without a common origin in a pre-given and authoritative reality like the Holocaust, individuals must project alternate sets of bonds to connect to each other, which may or may not be an illusion of sincerity as the new ground of personal commitment and interpersonal bonding (Seligman, 2009). In other words, without the educational historical Holocaust aspect available to the memorial visitor, the ability of the symbol to be interruptive and transformative is diminished. Visitors can still empathize with the modern LGBTQ community, but it is a projection of generational bonds that may or may not be an illusion. To invoke ritual, then, is not necessarily to eschew change. It is, however, to value the past, give credence to tradition, and accept that we are not the beginning and end of existence. Ritual, in fact, especially at a Pink Triangle memorial site, continues to provide an ongoing arena of creativity and tradition, the potential space within which cultural creativity for ending hate takes place and is worked out (Seligman, 2009).

### **Interruptive Symbols as Artifacts**

Before we experience dangerous memories, however, we experience (with our senses) the interruptive symbol of the Pink Triangle. This symbol acts as an interruption to our present circumstances, and preserves or invokes dangerous memories that have the potential to be radically transformative. The Pink Triangle is a liberating and transformative symbol that possesses a dangerous, albeit practical, memory (Jensen, 2002). It preserves the integrity of the people it represents (*all* the people—LGBTQ and Holocaust survivor alike) and unifies them for the purpose of mobilizing political action against oppressive social structures. Symbols have the potential to nurture solidarity and action against suffering in the present. These symbols also give hope to anyone working to achieve true social justice, whereby all humans are given the opportunity to flourish. They also serve as the ground for criticism of the status quo and are the impetus for transformation (Metz, 2007). In order to conquer suffering, these memories must be accurately preserved, collectively acted upon, and mobilized

in a practical and political way. Standing in solidarity with the voiceless and the marginalized is the Pink Triangle's call to action (Weingart, 2011). Thus, interruptive symbols must be strategically placed in order to reach the people who *need* to experience the dangerous memories. Hermeneutics alone does not create the necessary changes that allow for social justice. Rather, proximity to the symbols is a necessary element, at least a necessary *first* element.

If one's research seeks to investigate the influences of power and inequity on identity development with populations that are marginalized and oppressed, one's research methods must interrupt broad social trends that serve to marginalize the voices of the research participants through given power structures (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017). This might mean that in addition to phenomenological research method, which includes observation and non-participant interview methods, a researcher may need to include data gathering of the shared symbol itself, since the Pink Triangle, in this case, is a significant artifact used for identity leadership. Heidegger suggests that leadership-as-practice takes place in everyday practical coping activities, but leadership *learning* may only occur with disruption to unnoticed practices (as cited in Cunliffe & Hibbet, 2016). This includes an artifactual interruptive symbol such as a Pink Triangle "speaking" to visitors who reflect at a memorial. Symbols derive their meaning from their location within concrete utterances, but these in turn, only make sense in relation to other utterances within ongoing flows of transactions (Emirbayer, 1997). Meaning is constructed when people link received cues (observing a Pink Triangle memorial) with cognitive structures (which could be World War II, or the gay pride movement, or a vast spectrum in between or outside those concepts). A practice approach argues that we have identity partly because of the artifacts with which we are associated (Carroll, 2016), and the Pink Triangle is one of these artifacts.

## **Leadership and Identity**

*Phenomenology* is a branch of philosophy concerned with the nature of phenomena that holds that people's experiences cannot be observed objectively.

Spencer's research says that the work of making sense of both self and environment coalesces over time into a stable identity, but that identity formation also alters the environment in which sense making and identity formation occur (as cited in Ravitch & Riggan, 2017). With regard to the Pink Triangle memorials, this means that an individual visitor may form an identity with Holocaust survivors or the LGBTQ community. If they *both* resonate, however (because both have been represented at a particular memorial, and the Pink Triangle has worked as an interruptive symbol), the process of identity formation may be bidirectional. The possible ensuing call to social justice may affect the individual, but it also affects other people, and thus alters the environment in which sense-making and identity formation occur (Ravitch & Riggan, 2017). If, by visiting one of these memorials, the visitors are called to support gay rights, presumably tolerance and peace are being promoted in their home communities (or at least that is the hope). Engagement in the practice of visiting Pink Triangle memorials gives us certain experiences of participation, and what our communities pay attention to reifies us as participants (Wenger, 1998). An *identity*, then, is a layering of events of participation and reification by which our experience and its social interpretation inform each other (Wenger, 1998).

In brief, *communities of practice* are groups of people informally bound together by a shared experience and passion for a joint enterprise (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). Because its primary output, knowledge, is intangible, Wenger (1998) discusses three distinct modes of belonging in communities of practice: engagement, imagination, and alignment. These modes of belonging provide a framework for understanding various community types that have adopted the Pink Triangle artifact, particularly engagement. While *imagination* addresses one's image of the world, it does not necessarily result in a coordination of action. While *alignment* addresses coordinated discourses, it may or may not equal mutual engagement. *Engagement*, however, is active involvement in mutual processes of negotiation of meaning (Wenger, 1998). It is a threefold process, which includes (a) the conjunction of the ongoing negotiation of meaning of the Pink Triangle, (b) the unfolding of histories of practice from World War II



Germany and before to the present-day gay pride movement, and finally, (c) the formation of trajectories for continued social justice efforts. It is precisely the symbology at the memorials that helps us move into imagination and alignment to make our differences more manageable. Imagination, here, is the domain of abstract thought through this reified symbol, but all three modes of belonging become the tools for reconciling a local experience with a sense of the global horizon. If the memorial is effective and interruptive, this is the emergent phenomena of the Pink Triangle.

### **Inward/Outward Messaging: Repertoire, Periphery, and Boundary**

One interesting dynamic relating to the interruptive symbol of the Pink Triangle is the question of who these memorials are intended to reach. The symbol speaks inwardly to the communities that are directly affected, but they can also reach outward into the global community at large, mobilizing collective memory and advocating for positive cultural and social change. Americans tend to wear Pink Triangles and erect more visible memorials as a means of galvanizing support both inside and outside the community. Ironically, the trend toward Holocaust memorialization is present in many countries, but less so in Germany, where the original crimes occurred.

Sustained engagement gives rise to certain boundaries, which are a sign that the communities of practice have shared histories that give rise to significant differences between inside and outside (Wenger, 1998). It is difficult to reconcile this marginalization of experience (being homosexual) as a source of unique and emergent creativity.

This conversation speaks to the ideas of shared repertoire and periphery/inclusion. First, if we look at the ethical nature of human beings, the concern is to understand how some people may be marginalized through processes of leadership practice. There may be disparities of power and patterns of unjust exclusion. If so, identifying and problematizing injustice implies an ethical view on the value of social justice and participation (Woods, 2016). The modern LGBTQ community may be unaware that they are limiting the outward

messaging of the memorials by missing the historical component, even though outward messaging could reach a demographic that may be supportive and helpful to promoting tolerance.

Wenger (1998) refers to the “repertoire,” or the way things are done as a visible manifestation of a community of practice. It is here that an outsider may both observe and/or begin the necessary steps for gaining access or membership into the community. That community is not necessarily just homosexuals (with heterosexuals the outsiders), but rather it is the larger community that vilifies hate/marginalization, supports social justice/inclusion, and generally accepts LGBTQ equality. All homosexuals, whether they be Holocaust survivors/family or modern LGBTQ people, are presumably “in” this community. Straight people, even if they support LGBTQ equality, are the outsiders. LGBTQ community members are naturally and logically reticent toward the straight community, since they are the historic abusers. But caring, moderate, straight citizens can also experience interruptive symbols and collective memory at Pink Triangle memorials. People engaged in influencing the work and direction of an organization can equally be carriers of institutional and personal interests and of cultural ideas that position others hierarchically (Woods, 2016).

The term *legitimate peripheral participation* characterizes the process by which newcomers become included in a community of practice (Wenger, 1998). To be *peripheral* to a community is to have some degree of membership and legitimacy (versus being *marginal*, which is to be an outsider or close to becoming an outsider). Peripherality provides an approximation of full participation that gives exposure to actual practice (Wenger, 1998). The education on homosexual history and subsequent marginalization that one receives by visiting a Pink Triangle memorial is an example of this peripherality for non-LGBTQ people. It is a learning experience that helps newcomers be granted enough legitimacy to be treated as potential members. Boundaries necessarily divide, but they can also promote connection.

The modern LGBTQ community should not view the Pink Triangle as only an inward symbol, and should not resist the outward reach to the global community

for ongoing support. Instead, the designers of these memorials should embrace peripherality and legitimacy for nonmembers of the community of practice. This does not presuppose a generational encounter free of conflicts, but it does encourage dialogue that integrates the generational encounter into the process of negotiation through which a practice evolves (Wenger, 1998). Communities of practice frame identities by determining who people are and what they can do within and without the community. The combination of engagement and imagination results in a reflective practice (Wenger, 1998). Continuing to grant legitimacy to newcomers, regardless of sexuality, would presumably promote peace and tolerance, which in turn could embolden new members (and all members) toward greater social justice.

### **Practice, Meaning, and Learning**

Wenger (1998) lists four components in his social theory of learning: meaning, practice, community, and identity. While I have already touched on identity, practice is also important as a way of talking about the shared historical and social resources, frameworks, and perspectives that can sustain mutual engagement in action (Wenger, 1998). Wenger interprets *practice* as learning from doing, or paraphrasing for this case, learning through visiting a memorial. Practice is about meaning as an experience of everyday life, and exposure to the messages of the Holocaust and the gay pride movement can be a part of that.

Wenger (1998) points out that living meaningfully is an active process of producing meaning that is both dynamic and historical. If these memorials are designed to effectively evoke collective memory using interruptive symbols, then they almost certainly have to contain both a modern and a historical dynamic. Future research might explore the view that the memorials that contain both a historic and a modern interpretation of the Pink Triangle are the most effective. Wenger also contends that living meaningfully implies an engagement of a multiplicity of factors and perspectives (e.g., Holocaust memory and modern-day gay pride), and that this leads to the production of a new resolution to the

convergence of these factors and perspectives. The emergence from the practice of visitation is a sense of social justice for tolerance and inclusion.

Wenger (1998) describes *participation* as both a social and an individual phenomenon of which the underlying thread is the “possibility of mutual recognition” (56). In this case, mutual recognition seems very close to Halbwach’s (1980) definition of collective memory. The individual can resonate with the experience of a social group, even if it is on the basis of shame or suffering. Mutual recognition presumes stable historical entities of which individual recognition is a possibility. Today’s LGBTQ individuals who have an experience of abuse and/or marginalization can identify with the experience of a Holocaust survivor and share a collective memory. The mechanisms of recognition are both being (first-hand account), and knowing or learning history (cognitive) from a memorial visit. The possibility of mutual recognition or collective memory provides the impetus for engagement, which is the gathering and collecting together of people for the purpose for greater social justice.

Participation in the visit experience and reification of the interruptive symbol messaging are the central dynamic processes in this particular community of practice. Reification is a source of remembering and forgetting by producing forms that persist and change according to their own laws (Wenger, 1998). The Pink Triangle is unique in this sense. No other Holocaust survival group has embraced the symbol of their demise the way Pink Triangle prisoners and modern LGBTQ people have. Jews, who were forced to wear Stars of David during the Holocaust, have not taken its religious set of meanings and coordinated or infused them with 19<sup>th</sup>-century ideologies to produce an updated version of their traditions. The Star of David is still worn as a religious icon of Judaism (as it was before World War II), but is not necessarily worn today as a symbol of pride or unity in suffering. It is precisely the gay community of practice that continues to build Pink Triangle memorials to the collective memory of suffering to end hate and encourage social justice. The meaning of the Pink Triangle symbol may change over time, but the learning and practice of tolerance is reified through new memorials and through the maintenance, redesign,

expansion, and promotion of existing ones. The pragmatism of practice exists only in the creation of spaces where we all agree to eschew final understanding and just do what has to be done (Seligman, 2009). What has to be done is to create a shared space where the communal “could be” of peace and tolerance, which becomes the basis of the ongoing experience for communities of practice. The “practices” are twofold for leaders: physical visitation and learning at the memorial, but then a reification of practicing increased social justice.

## **Conclusion**

Wenger (1998) stresses that learning and meaning-making are built across cultures and across time. The Pink Triangle memorials are a perfect example of this. The “cultures” are Holocaust survivors and the modern LGBTQ community, and the three generations that have passed since World War II illustrate the expanse of time. This perspective affords the possibility to re-learn and reify emergent and creative human interactions for social justice from history and apply them to current social practices.

Leaders use artifacts (Pink Triangles) and rituals (visiting memorial sites) to reify the heinousness of homosexual persecution and marginalization. They also reify the shared meaning of tolerance between many generations separated by time (also referred to as “mutual recognition” or “collective memory”) to evoke dangerous memories and eventually ignite transformative change. The identity formation that takes place from the learning at the memorials, as well as the subsequent meaning-making, solidifies advocacy for positive cultural and social change. While there is room for improvement in the area of periphery, specifically inclusion of newcomers by existing community members, the very existence of these memorials allows for the potential space for a shared “could be.” Relationships between individuals, not to mention the interests that accompany them, understandably require mutual trust and reciprocal recognition to come into being, conditions that happen to be absent in the state of nature (Emirbayer, 1997). However, having an effective memorial site that addresses both history and modern relational sociology, using both artifacts and rituals to influence

identity and meaning, allows both entities to be changed by the interaction. This is how leadership can initiate social progress in a community of practice.

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Anne M. "Marnie" Rorholm is a doctoral candidate in leadership studies at Gonzaga University researching, publishing, and lecturing on power, influence, and interruptive symbology. She has an MBA from Gonzaga and serves as office manager for the Military Science/Army ROTC program at Gonzaga. Ms. Rorholm is the inaugural winner of the Eva Lassman Memorial Student Research Award from the Institute for Hate Studies for her work on Holocaust memorials around the world, specifically the phenomenology of the Pink Triangle. She can be reached at [rorholm1@gonzaga.edu](mailto:rorholm1@gonzaga.edu).

## The Harder They Must Fall?: Leadership Self-Efficacy as Hindrance to Millennials' Leadership Development\*

Joy H. Karriker  
East Carolina University

Nathan S. Hartman  
Illinois State University

This article examines aspiring leaders' willingness to participate in leadership development activities as influenced by leadership self-efficacy (LSE) and motivation to lead (MTL) and propose LSE and its interaction with MTL as potential "fatal flaws" in leadership actualization, particularly among potentially overly confident, yet eager, Millennials. A total of 171 students from ages 18 to 26 participated in the study. Results indicate that LSE interacts with MTL and correlates with attenuated participation in formal, and potentially essential, developmental activities. This study contributes to the leadership development literature by applying individual difference variables to increase the understanding of factors that may interact with MTL in influencing developmental choices. It also integrates pride and expectancy theories to enhance our understanding of the relative contributions of these variables to the prediction of leadership development activity preferences and pursuits.

**Key words:** expectancy theories, individual differences, leadership development, leadership self-efficacy, Millennials, motivation to lead

Ask most executives and educators what their priorities are for their employees and students, and a commonly recurring theme in their responses is "leadership development" (The Conference Board & McKinsey, 2012). Clearly, the idea of developing leaders and leadership skills is popular both in the world of commerce and in the academic fields that feed it. In fact, leadership development has become an industry in and of itself, with U.S. companies spending nearly \$14 billion per year in this area (Loew & O'Leonard, 2012). Not coincidentally, the research streams regarding leadership and its development continue to flourish. Yet only slightly more than 50% of all aspiring leaders are satisfied with their organizations' leadership development opportunities, and three out of 10 leaders fail to demonstrate qualities of effective leadership (Bernthal & Wellins, 2006).

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\*Karriker, J. H., & Hartman, N. S. (2019). The harder they must fall?: Leadership self-efficacy as hindrance to Millennials' leadership development. *International Leadership Journal*, 11(1), 55–77.



Given all the attention to and investments in this domain, coupled with the widespread dissatisfaction with its structure and/or outcomes, research in the area of leadership development will continue to be vital to companies, employees, and academics. Related scientific inquiry can offer aid to both scholars and practitioners through examination of the individual factors at work in determining the choices and perceived efficacies of leadership development activities. According to Tai (2006), employees' training motivation, and general self-efficacy are prominent factors in ensuring, and potentially multiplying, the effectiveness of employee training outcomes, which includes individual reactions on how well they like and feel about training (Colquitt, LePine, & Noe, 2000). Findings indicate general self-efficacy is the mediating mechanism through which motivation to learn impacts learning. These attitudinal and affective responses relate to Level 1 (reaction) of Kirkpatrick's four levels of learning and evaluation model (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2007). However, the Kirkpatrick model tells us that even though a positive reaction to a training program may be desirable, it does not ensure learning in and of itself. In this light, this study considers how students like and feel about a specific form of training—leadership development—based on their leadership self-efficacy and motivation to (learn to) lead. Specifically, in an application of leadership development, pride, and expectancy theories, this research aims to assist with this effort, as it examines how individuals, especially younger leaders in training, make determinations regarding the leadership development activities in which they wish to invest their time, effort, and money. This study contributes to the leadership development literature by applying individual difference variables to increase the understanding of factors that may interact with motivation to lead (MTL) in influencing developmental choices. The study also integrates pride and expectancy theories to enhance our understanding of the relative contributions of these variables to the prediction of leadership development activity preferences and pursuits.

Theories of leadership and leadership development have a rich history, ranging from the "great man" theories (Bernard, 1926) to behavioral theories (Katz &

Kahn, 1978) and the emerging “authentic” leadership development theories (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Despite this intense and continuing stream of scientific inquiry, however, Avolio and Gardner (2005) note that the leadership development literature has suffered from a lack of rigor. Over the past 100 years, Avolio and Gardner assert that theories of leadership development have somewhat systematically neglected the core processes that constitute developmental efforts. This research intentionally focuses on these formal programs and core processes and, thus, offers a potential contribution to theory and rigorous exploration.

*Expectancy theory* (Vroom, 1964) poses that an individual will choose among forms of voluntary activities, based on his or her estimation of the effectiveness of those activities in furthering his or her aspirations, his or her judgment as to whether he or she can successfully complete those activities, and the value he or she places on attaining the rewards (in this case, leadership skill development) those activities promise. By applying this theory to the arena of leadership development, we propose to augment the intentional focus on the understudied core processes mentioned above with an enhanced understanding of why and when individuals—and, by implication, organizations—choose to invest their time, talents, and substantial resources in particular developmental opportunities. In keeping with the extant literature, it is expected that individual motivation to lead (MTL) and leadership self-efficacy (LSE), along with other individual differences (e.g., age), will play important roles in these determinations. Developing individual leaders requires an understanding of the complex combination of individual characteristics and motivations. Examining these constructs informs how the leader development process does and could unfold. Individual characteristics like personality predict leader effectiveness (Strang & Kuhnert, 2009) and are associated with an individual’s leader identity (Lord & Hall, 2005) and leadership style (de Vries, 2012). However, knowledge regarding individuals who voluntarily choose to participate in leader self-development remains lacking (Boyce, Zaccaro, & Wisecarver, 2010; Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014). Organizations find voluntary and self-directed

development enticing as it is often the most cost effective (Reichard & Johnson, 2011), and some evidence suggests that certain personality combinations have an impact on leader skill development choices (Mumford et al., 2000).

Expectancy theory and theories of leader development support an anticipation that when aspiring leaders are highly motivated (MTL), they will be eager to pursue developmental opportunities because they believe they can be successful in that pursuit, this success will make them better leaders, and leadership development is a worthwhile accomplishment. The current focus on college students who are aspiring leaders and hubristic pride theory, however, may amend this expectation with regard to new entrants to the workforce.

According to the Pew Research Center (Fry, 2018), Millennials are individuals born between 1981 and 1996. Popular thinking relates certain generational traits to members of this group with cultural influences including rewards for effort (i.e., everyone gets a trophy) without regard to results, which may have brought about a false sense of accomplishment. Compared with other generations, Millennials have lower levels of work centrality, defined as “individual beliefs regarding the degree of importance that work plays in their lives” (Walsh & Gordon, 2008, 46). By implication, individuals who are not highly “cognitively and attitudinally embedded” (Tziner, Ben-David, Oren, & Sharoni, 2014, 557) in their work would have lower levels of focus on their work-related personal development (Deal, Altmand, & Rogelberg, 2010). They also have heightened levels of self-esteem and narcissism overall. Narcissism, essentially a form of self-love, is based on self-esteem and can become unhealthy or even psychopathological when this self-love is excessive (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1985). Similarly, a healthy dose of self-efficacy may become concerning if it becomes excessive to the point of hubris. While excessive self-love can become a negative form of narcissism, exaggerated self-efficacy can become hubris or a colloquial “false pride,” thus bearing out the phrase: “the bigger the ego, the harder the fall” (Proverbs 16:18, The Message). The literature on hubristic pride (Carver & Johnson, 2010; Humphrey, 2013) provides a basis for this assertion. Whereas authentic pride is based on experience and accomplishment, *hubristic pride* is derived from a general belief in

one's strengths and abilities (Carver, Sinclair, & Johnson, 2010; Tracy & Robins, 2004, 2007). Perceptions of the latter are often arrogance or conceit that was not attained through a specific goal attainment (Carver et al., 2010). Orth, Robins, and Soto (2010) found that hubristic pride peaks in adolescence and then declines to its lowest levels around age 65. The inference from this theoretical stream is that high levels of leadership self-efficacy among these as yet unproven young leaders may become a "fatal flaw" in the desire to actualize their leadership potential by providing a deceptively inflated sense of their actual abilities and preventing these motivated individuals from pursuing formal developmental activities. Thus, the Millennial who puts forth what he or she considers exceptional effort may succumb to a potentially dangerous elixir of (over)confidence and (over)-eagerness. If so, this theoretical integration may also have significant implications for younger, less seasoned leaders already in the workforce.

Motivation to lead affects the intensity of leader effort and the persistence toward acting in the role of leader, as well as the decisions made by developing leaders (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). It is composed of three dimensions. *Affective-identity MTL* is defined as the motivation emanating from the valences associated with the act of leadership, or the positive emotions generated when one leads others. *Social-normative MTL* describes an attribute of those individuals who take leadership roles because they feel a sense of duty or responsibility to hold a leadership role. *Non-calculative MTL* represents the motivation of people who only lead if they are not calculating the various costs of leading relative to the benefits of doing so. Chan and Drasgow (2001) contributed to this stream by asserting the importance of MTL in one's pursuit of developmental programs. Following them, this article examines the roles overall MTL, leadership self-efficacy, age, and other individual differences play in an individual's selection of leadership development activities, based on individuals' perceptions of the respective benefits of these choices to his or her personal development as a leader. Specifically, it is expected that an individual's MTL will have a positive relationship with his or her determination to pursue formal leadership development efforts.

*Hypothesis 1: Motivation to lead is significantly related to Millennials' willingness to participate in leadership development activities.*

*Leadership self-efficacy (LSE)* is an individual's discernment that he or she is capable of leading and is able to set direction for workgroups, establish successful relationships with followers, and help followers overcome obstacles to change (Paglis & Green, 2002). It is a specific, leadership-oriented form of self-efficacy, which reflects one's judgment that he or she can "orchestrate performance through successfully executing the behaviors that are required to produce desired outcomes" (Paglis & Green, 2002, 216) as a leader (Bandura, 1997; Gist & Mitchell, 1992). An individual's judgment of LSE influences the initiation, intensity, and persistence of behavior (Bandura, 1986, 1997). Typically, and in keeping with expectancy theory, people invest themselves in activities that they see as efficacious and in which they see their efforts as effective; that is, they apply judgments with regard to their capabilities to exert the persistent effort they see as required to produce desired outcomes. This research examines LSE judgments for their influence on aspiring leaders' intentions to pursue formal developmental programs. Ng, Ang, and Chan (2008) found that LSE moderated the relationships between certain individual difference variables (e.g., neuroticism, extraversion, and conscientiousness) and leader effectiveness, but only in specific situational contexts. In the present context of aspiring leaders categorized as Millennials, the hubristic pride literature leads us to expect that LSE may deter certain individuals from enhancing their potential effectiveness through formal programs.

Millennials are unusually and extraordinarily confident of their abilities (George 2008; Greenfield, 1998). Greenfield (1998) proposes that this confidence has been buoyed by an educational system with inflated grades and standardized tests, in which many Millennials are expert in performing well. The idea of paying their dues by working hard to demonstrate their worth before they are given significant tasks is likely to be resisted by Millennials. (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010, 228).

Millennials also have high expectations for the amount of training and career advancement opportunities provided by employers (Alsop, Nicholson, & Miller,

2009), yet “coworkers see them as overly confident and inappropriately demanding, asking, ‘Who do they think they are?’” (Meyers & Sadaghiani, 2010, 228). Empirical research demonstrates that the Millennials, as a cohort, are high on self-efficacy and unusually self-assured (Twenge 2009; Twenge & Campbell, 2001). They are more aware of career paths and have had parents place pressure on them to succeed (Howe & Strauss, 2007). Parents of this cohort have been more likely to encourage taking college prep classes and helping them prepare for future employment. Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) feel that Millennials have a special inclination toward leadership because it fits with the messages they have received about personal achievement and career focus. Employers’ expressions of interest in hiring leaders (NACE, 2006), along with parental prodding, have at least suggested to Millennials that it is socially desirable to express aspirations for leadership and participation in leadership experiences. However, this begs the question: are Millennials who are socialized toward having leadership aspirations likely to seek leadership development?

In an extension of this pursuit of understanding, and in an effort to focus on understudied core leadership development processes (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), the authors expect LSE to moderate the relationship between MTL and the intended pursuit of formal leadership development pathways in our sample. Since leader effectiveness is typically associated with continual developmental efforts, the anticipation is that a high level of LSE will decrease the highly motivated aspiring leader’s willingness to pursue leadership development activities, when controlling for age and personality factors.

*Hypothesis 2: Leadership self-efficacy is negatively related to Millennials’ willingness to participate in leadership development activities.*

*Hypothesis 3: Leadership self-efficacy negatively moderates the relationship between Millennials’ motivation to lead and willingness to participate in leadership development activities.*

## Method

### Sample

A total of 171 students (104 men, 63 women, four non-reporting) participated in the study. Participants ranged in age from 18 to 26 years and were taking business classes at either a small Midwestern or a large southeastern university in the United States at the time of the study. While Generation Z students are now entering universities, the respondents in this study were Millennials. Approximately 81% of respondents were sophomore, juniors, or seniors, and the remaining participants were graduate students. The racial composition of this sample was as follows: 87.7% White, 4.2% Black, 3.0% Asian, 1.8% Hispanic, and 3.5% other. Of the participants, 49% reported currently being in a leadership role in an organization, and the average number of leadership roles held by students while attending college was 1.5 (mode = 2). Only 8.9% indicated they were rarely or never selected for a leadership role in high school or college, and 99% reported taking one or more leadership classes while in college (mode = 1). In addition, 63% reported actively seeking out activities they believed improved their skills as leaders, and 95% believed it was important for them to improve their skills as leaders and believed training could improve their ability to lead.

### Measures

**Motivation to Lead.** A 16-item self-report instrument using a Likert-type scale was used to measure MTL (Chan & Drasgow, 2001). Example items included the following statements:

- Most of the time, I prefer being a leader rather than a follower when working in a group.
- I am only interested to lead a group if there are clear advantages for me.
- I feel that I have a duty to lead others if I am asked.

Cronbach's alpha was .88.

**Leadership Self-Efficacy.** A five-item instrument using a Likert-type scale was constructed based on a similar measure developed by Feasel (1995) and used by Chan and Drasgow (2001). The included items were the following statements:

- I feel confident that I can be an effective leader in most of the groups I work with.
- I am not confident that I can lead others effectively (reverse worded).
- If given the opportunity today, I would be an effective leader.
- Others would be willing to endorse me as their leader.
- I believe I am able to influence other people as their leader.

Cronbach's alpha was .74.

***Willingness to Participate in Additional Leadership Development Activities.*** The researchers obtained information about the participants' willingness to participate in leadership development activities by asking them to rate the likelihood they would voluntarily participate in different activities if they were made available. Given the age and experience level of the sample, a broad and inclusive, rather than prescriptive, measure was deemed as most appropriate. This breadth afforded the opportunity to capture the variability to determine those with a weaker versus a stronger interest in self-development. Those with higher scores were judged as being more willing to participate in leader development activities. Similar to Gottfried et al. (2011), we note these intentions are likely to predict leadership outcomes. Higher scores represent those with greater leadership potential, and higher scoring individuals have made more attempts at developing their own leadership qualities in terms of constructive development. Thus, they are closer to moving from a dependent to an independent developmental framework (McCauley, Drath, Palus, O'Connor, & Baker, 2006). The willingness to select a leadership development activity were self-ranked from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), and the participants were asked: To improve my skills as a leader, I would want to

- participate in a service learning project;
- examine leadership through case studies;
- complete a questionnaire or instrument about my personality;
- write a journal reflection about my experiences;
- attend a lecture on leadership;
- participate in a low ropes or team course;



- read articles or books on the topic of leadership;
- receive formal feedback on my knowledge or ability from a career coach or mentor;
- participate in a group project where I present information to colleagues or peers;
- participate in an exercise where I complete research on a topic related to leadership;
- participate in a skit with other actors where we recreate a difficult work situation;
- listen to an individual telling a story about their experiences;
- be videotaped and given feedback about my performance;
- participate in an athletic event or activity;
- have an opportunity to compete with others for a prize or privilege;
- participate in informal networking or discussion with peers;
- participate in a group project where no formal leader is assigned; and
- participate in a simulation or game where I am asked to demonstrate my knowledge, skills, and abilities.

An overall measure for the willingness to participate in additional leadership development activities (LDR) was formed by standardizing and summing the items.

### **Controls**

**Personality.** The Big Five personality factors and empathy measures were taken from Goldberg's (1999a, 1999b) publicly available International Personality Item Pool. The measure consisted of five 6-item subscales: agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, emotional stability, and openness to experience (Goldberg, 1999a, 1999b). Cronbach's alpha analyses showed that all five subscales had reasonably good internal consistency reliabilities, with alphas between .616 and .813 (see Table 1 on the next page).

**Self-Efficacy.** The general self-efficacy measure consisted of a 10-item scale (Bosscher & Smit, 1998). Example items included the following statements:

- When I make plans, I am almost certain that I can make them work.

- If I can't do a job the first time, I keep trying until I can.
- When I make plans, I am certain I can make them work.

Cronbach's alpha was .70.

## Results

The means, standard deviations, and correlations of the predictors—personality, age, leadership self-efficacy, self-efficacy, MTL, and the willingness to participate in additional leadership development activities (LDR)—are presented in Table 1. The reliabilities are in the diagonal. Only emotional stability and age were not significantly related to LDR. Other notable significant correlations include the correlations between MTL and the variables of age, LDR self-efficacy, and extraversion.

**Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, Intercorrelations, and Reliabilities**

Variables	Mean (SD)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Gender	1.38(.49)											
2. Age	2.40(1.07)	-.11										
3. LDR role	1.50(.50)	-.23**	.02									
4. Agreeableness	3.65(.54)	.22**	-.10	-.08								
5. Conscientiousness	3.74(.66)	.24**	-.03	-.08	.19*							
6. Emotional stability	3.10(.78)	-.23**	.03	.04	.32**	-.18*						
7. Extraversion	3.56(.71)	.13	-.24**	-.23	.30	.08	.10					
8. Openness to experience	3.53(.61)	.02	.10	-.16*	.28**	.07	.06	.38**				
9. MTL	11.26(1.80)	.22**	-.11	-.32**	.31**	.20**	-.07	.46**	.38**			
10. Self-efficacy	3.97(.61)	.14	.05	-.124	.39**	.36**	-.06	.36**	.36**	.34**		
11. LDR self-efficacy	3.94(.62)	.01	-.12	-.37**	.33**	.26**	.02	.51**	.45**	.63**	.49**	
12. LDR	20.01(6.65)	.14	-.04	-.1	.45**	.24**	.09	.29**	.30**	.29**	.30**	.38**

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (two-tailed).

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

As anticipated, many of the variables were significantly related to LDR. Six multiple regressions were conducted, examining more specific relationships between the focal and control variables and LDR. In the first multiple regression, we examined MTL's ability to predict LDR while controlling for personality influences. The Big Five personality scales were entered in the first step of the regression. MTL was entered in the second step of the regression and did not significantly add incremental validity over personality. Agreeableness and conscientiousness were the only variables to be significantly related to LDR. To

aid in understanding of incremental validity results, regression analyses were used to predict the LDR score from some of the Big Five personality variables. Of the subsequent analyses, the only hierarchical regression analysis to determine the incremental validity of MTL over the Big Five predictors was an analysis that examined MTL over conscientiousness, emotional stability, and openness to experience. Conscientiousness, openness to experience, and MTL were significantly related to LDR, and adding MTL improved the multiple correlation to .41, an incremental  $R$  change of .02 ( $p < .05$ ).

**Table 2: Significant MTL and Personality Models**

Model 1		LDR		Model 2		LDR	
Dependent Variable				Dependent Variable			
Predictor	$\beta$	$\beta$		Predictor	$\beta$	$\beta$	
Step 1				Step 1			
Age	.02	.02		Age	-.07	-.04	
				Conscientiousness	.24*	.21*	
Step 2				Emotional Stability	.11	.12	
Agreeableness	.35**	.34**		Openness to Exp.	.28**	.22**	
Conscientiousness	.15*	.14*		Step 2			
Emotional Stability	-.02	-.01		MTL		.16*	
Extraversion	.12	.10		Step 3			
Openness to Exp.	.14	.13		MTL		.05	
Step 3							
Multiple $R$		.52	.52	Multiple $R$		.39	.41
$R^2$		.27	.27	$R^2$		.15	.17
Adjusted $R^2$		.24	.24	Adjusted $R^2$		.13	.14
Significant		.01	n.s.	Significant		.001	.05

a 1 = strongly agree, 5 = strongly disagree.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Hypothesis 1, that MTL is significantly related to the willingness to participate in leadership development activities, was supported. Specifically, MTL was positively related to LDR. Hypothesis 2, that leadership self-efficacy is negatively related to the willingness to participate in leadership development activities, was not supported. The third hypothesis was supported, in that results indicate LSE negatively moderated the relationship between motivation to lead and the willingness to participate in leadership development activities. The presence of

high levels of LSE attenuated the relationship between MTL and LDR to the extent that the relationship between the interaction term and LDR was negative. Table 3 reveals the significant MTL and LSE interaction, and the results are plotted in Figure 1. The mean for LDR was significantly lower for the no MTL and no LSE condition compared to other conditions. General self-efficacy did not moderate the relationship between MTL and LDR, suggesting LSE formed a unique relationship with MTL and LDR in our sample.

**Table 3: Results of LDR and LSE x MTL Analysis**

Dependent Variable: LDR	R	R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> Change	β
Step 1				
Age	.04	.002		-.02
Step 2				
LSE	.37	.14	.14	.28**
MTL				.10
Step 3				
LSE x MTL	.41	.17	.03	-.17*

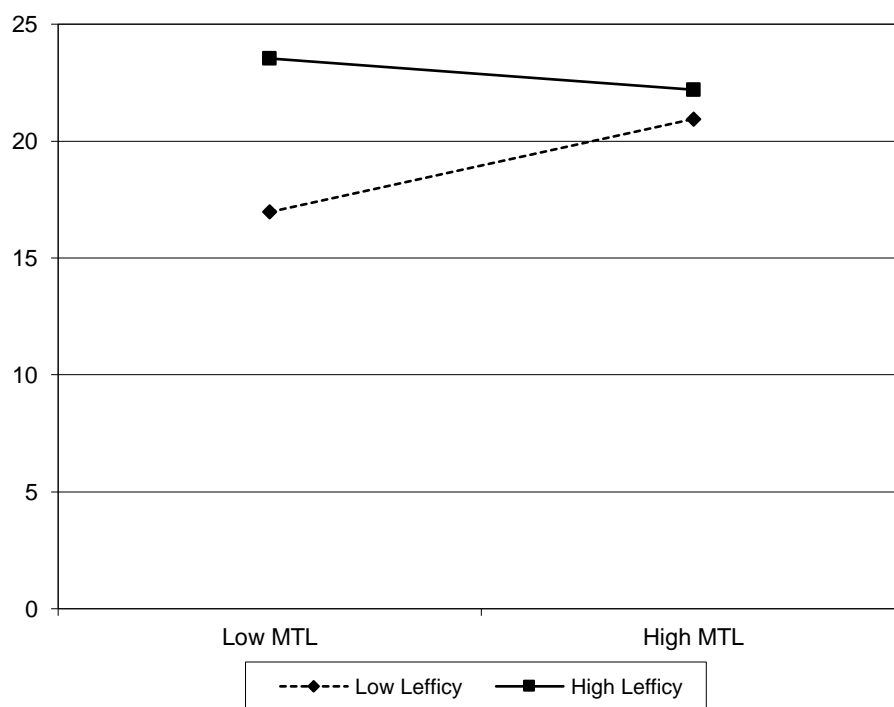


Figure 1. Interaction of MTL and LSE on LDR

## **Discussion**

The trend of encouraging employees and students to take control of their leadership development is prevalent in industry and academia. However, theory development has suffered from lack of rigor with regard to specific, core processes related to such developmental efforts (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). There has also been little empirical evidence to explain what might drive an individual's intentions to participate in his or her leadership self-development and, therefore, direct or justify the substantial resource investments firms and schools are making in this arena. This article sought to contribute to the development of this literature and increase the understanding of factors that may interact with MTL in influencing developmental choices. It examines factors related to younger leaders' selections of leadership development options and includes consideration of individual difference variables. In keeping with the extant literature, we found positive relationships between the personality factors of conscientiousness and agreeableness, MTL, LSE, and willingness to participate in leadership development activities in our sample.

However, perhaps most interestingly and of focal importance, we note that high levels of LSE attenuate the relationship between MTL and willingness to participate in leadership development activities. This finding is consistent with the integration of pride and expectancy theories in our sample. That is, the hubristic (i.e., non-experiential or unrealistic) pride of unproven young leaders may indicate overconfidence. When highly motivated, eager individuals are overconfident, their willingness to participate in leadership development activities is lowered. Their tendency to want to "jump right in" is not tempered by an experience- and critical feedback-based, realistic expectation of the need for, or benefits from, developmental efforts. The long-term implication is that their hubristic pride may result in a fall, or at least a failure to perform at peak levels because of an omitted, yet critically important developmental process. We infer from our results that individuals, and Millennials specifically, need accurate feedback on their leadership abilities—even if this feedback "feels" like failure—in order to have realistic, as opposed to hubristic, LSE assessments. In this way,

the motivated prospective leader must “fall” to avoid the overconfidence that would have him or her omit beneficial leadership development activities. Essentially, this early failure—or fall—and accompanying realistic LSE will be related to leadership development pursuits and may prevent other, possibly greater, failures of leadership in the future. Thus, in addition to providing an extension of the MTL framework, the application of hubristic pride and expectancy theories to this work offers contributions to practice.

### **Practical Implications**

The implications of the current findings are particularly germane to developmental programs for younger (and prospective) employees and may be revealing with regard to generational perspectives. Students do express willingness to participate in leadership development; yet, it is the context of their development, along with their sustained willingness to pursue it, that may be most important to determining how their skills will be catalyzed by organizations in the future (Allen & Hartman, 2008). We assert that experience (and early failure) may be the best teacher in the long run, but it may not be the most cost-effective one. As the Millennial generation continues to enter the workforce with the expectations of having desirable training opportunities (Ng, Schweitzer, & Lyons, 2010), organizations with a self-development model may wish to tailor their programs to provide an enticing, yet gradual, introduction of on-the-job learning opportunities. In this way, they might temper the new employee’s zeal to “jump right in” with programs that offer a safety net with regard to organizational performance.

An alternative perspective suggests implications for individuals who reported being engaged with their education or other developmental experiences. Those organizations willing to provide development programs may find that employees with a history of developmental engagement are best suited to acquire information and most willing to transfer this training back into the organization for their mutual benefit (Tharenou & Lyndon, 1990); thus, they may find it beneficial to include such factors in their selection and hiring processes. Further, and as suggested by Tsai and Tai (2003), these younger workers may be more likely to engage fully in training programs if management signals the importance of this

development with specific leadership development assignments, rather than offering them as voluntary selections. With either interpretation, future efforts to understand better the individual and motivational components that contribute to aspiring leaders' willingness to involve themselves fully in leadership development activities are needed to inform corporate, educational, and related scholarly pursuits and investments.

### **Limitations**

A limitation of the current study is that it was conducted using a student population with a relatively homogenous demographic background regarding age and race. The sample of Millennials limits generalizability of results to today's Generation Z university students, and caution should be used when making recommendations for a more diverse population of Millennials with more work experience. Second, the present study relied only on intentions to participate in leader self-development activity, and some responses may suffer from social desirability that would be better controlled through the measurement of actual leader self-development behaviors. Further research should evaluate these concepts across a wider variety of individuals participating in developmental activities.

### **Conclusion**

The results showed that MTL predicted willingness to participate, above and beyond the influence of the personality traits of conscientiousness and openness to experience, and with little regard to age and leadership experience. Specifically, in the current sample, possessing either of these specific personality traits or MTL correlated with a positive attitudinal approach to leadership development activities. Possessing both conscientiousness and openness to experience, along with high MTL, however, was not enough to significantly increase development intentions. Additionally, agreement on how best to measure leader development has been absent in the literature (Day, et al, 2014), and the breadth of the measure used in this study for willingness to participate in additional leadership development activities helps prevent an artificially prescriptive interpretation of the data. The measure we use, while intentionally

broad, contributes to the literature by addressing the progress or intended progress individuals have made toward the attainment of 10,000 hours of dedicated practice needed to attain expert status as a leader (Ericsson & Charness, 1994). As a result, this inclusive measure captures those closer toward the development of leadership. Future research should examine the nuances of this measure over time and within controlled conditions.

An individual's development toward leadership is a self-reinforcing process; as one gains greater leadership efficacy, he or she is more likely to engage in leadership experiences (Murphy & Johnson, 2011). Individuals with more early developmental experiences may be more ready for an independent developmental framework (McCauley et al., 2006) approach as a young professional, but others may need a developmental structure associated with dependent development frameworks. While the "jump right in" approach may seem to cater to the stereotypical entitlement associated with Millennials, the reality may be that the number of Millennials exposed to leadership tasks during their youth is greater than that of previous generations. Thus, these experiences affected young professionals' expectations to include pairing leader development opportunities with entry-level professional jobs.

The focal examination of the effects of LSE in the current study indicates that LSE by itself is not significantly related to the enhancement of LDR. Further, in this sample of Millennials, when individuals had high levels of LSE, MTL was not highly related with LDR. In a broad sense, this suggests that high levels of LSE can attenuate the likelihood that some highly motivated (and, therefore, eager) individuals will take advantage of leadership development opportunities regardless of age and other personality characteristics. With specific regard to the students in our sample, this suggests the hubris associated with younger leaders, who are quite anxious to practice leadership, may lead them to forego developmental opportunities they may see as unnecessary or in which they do not wish to invest their time and energy.



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Joy H. Karriker, PhD, is an associate professor of management at East Carolina University. She received her PhD from Virginia Commonwealth University, and her research interests include organizational justice, leadership, social exchange processes, and organizational capabilities and resources. She has published articles in the *Journal of Management*, the *Journal of Business Research*, the *Journal of Leadership and Organizational Studies*, the *Journal of Organizational Psychology*, and the *Journal of Management Development*. She can be reached at [karrikerj@ecu.edu](mailto:karrikerj@ecu.edu).

Nathan S. Hartman, PhD, received his PhD from Virginia Commonwealth University and is currently an associate professor at Illinois State University. His primary research interests include organizational citizenship behaviors, employee selection, and leader

development. He has authored articles in publications including the *Journal of Management Development*, *Organizational Research Methods*, *Group & Organization Management*, *Personnel Psychology*, and the *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*. He can be reached at [nshartm@ilstu.edu](mailto:nshartm@ilstu.edu).

## **Organizational Commitment: A Review of the Conceptual and Empirical Literature and a Research Agenda\***

**Basel Al-Jabari**  
International American Business Training & Testing

**Issam Ghazzawi**  
University of La Verne

Although much has been written on the subject of organizational commitment, this article attempts to provide a grounded exploration of the current conceptual and empirical literature on the subject. Therefore, a primary objective of this research is to investigate theoretical and empirical perspectives that seek to explain organizational commitment, with particular attention paid to the foundational research on the factors and dimensions that affect employee retention. In addition to enriching the literature regarding commitment to one's organization, this article provides a roadmap to guide the future research efforts of scholars and practicing managers with a suggested research agenda.

**Key words:** affective commitment, behavioral commitment, employee retention, exchange theory of employee commitment, organizational commitment, social identity theory

The concept of organizational commitment, when used as a predictor of employee retention, has become the focus of managers in general and human resource departments in many organizations (Idris, 2014). For instance, a key responsibility of human resource (HR) managers is to understand the factors that create employee commitment and use that knowledge to leverage employee retention and productivity (Steel, Griffeth, & Hom, 2002).

*Organizational commitment (OC)* is defined as "the relative strength of an individual's identification with and involvement in a particular organization" (Mowday, Steers, & Porter, 1979, 226). Porter, Steers, Mowday, and Boulian (1974) assert that OC describes an employee's state of commitment to the organization, as well as an employee's identification with the organization's values and goals. The majority of the research examining OC has been examined either through social identity theory and its related body of literature

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\*Al-Jabari, B., & Ghazzawi, I. (2019). Organizational commitment: A review of the conceptual and empirical literature and a research agenda. *International Leadership Journal*, 11(1), 78–119.

(e.g., Alias, Rasdi, Ismail, & Samah, 2013; Carmeli, Gilat, & Weisberg, 2006; Demir, 2011; Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002; Kang, Stewart, & Kim, 2011; Mael & Ashforth, 1992; Smidts, Pruyn, Cees, & Riel, 2001; Smith, Gregory, & Cannon, 1996; Tuna, Ghazzawi, Yesiltas, Tuna, & Arslan, 2016) or through attitudinal and behavioral commitment to the organization (e.g., Ghazzawi, 2008; Gunlu, Aksarayli, & Perçin, 2010; McNeese-Smith & Nazarey, 2001; Meyer & Allen, 1991; Pei-Lee & Sun, 2012; Porter & Steers, 1973).

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the roles of managers and human resource departments have grown increasingly complex when it comes to motivating and retaining people (Idris, 2014). The globalization of the workforce through advances in computer technology and telecommunications has created more challenges for managers in attracting talent, and ensuring an environment where those employees can contribute as long-term assets to the organization (Singh & Gupta, 2015) is becoming increasingly difficult.

Faloye (2014) suggests that when an organization can recruit, train, and retain skilled individuals, the overall stability of the organization is maintained, both in terms of productivity and financial viability. Employees' OC has been assessed as a predictor of employee retention in several studies (e.g., Allen & Meyer, 1990; Balfour & Wechsler; 1996; Meyer & Allen; 1991, 1997; Mowday, Porter, & Steers, 1982; Mowday et al., 1979; Suliman & Iles; 2000; Tuna et al., 2016). OC has also been investigated as a predictor of employee effectiveness in carrying out the mission and vision of the organizational leadership (see Singh & Gupta, 2015).

Accordingly, Allen and Meyer (1990) theorize, through a conceptual model, that OC encompasses three dimensions: (a) affective commitment (AC), (b) normative commitment (NC), and (c) continuance commitment (CC). While *affective commitment* is determined by an employee's choice to remain committed to an organization due to some emotional identification (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Singh & Gupta, 2015), *normative commitment* is the feelings of obligation of the individual based on perceived attachment to an organization's goals (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Singh & Gupta, 2015). Finally, *continuance*



*commitment* is the extent to which an employee feels committed due to his or her own economics (Allen & Meyer, 1990; Meyer & Allen, 1984).

This study focuses on OC because the existing literature focuses on specific or limited causes of commitment, while other causes have not received enough attention from researchers. Hence, this paper has two main objectives: (a) review the available literature on OC and its multidimensional constructs, and (b) provide an integrated, theoretical model that can logically explain varying reasons associated with employee commitment. Specifically, this research will be built on the following concepts found in OC literature: affective commitment, normative commitment, continuance commitment, and the exchange theory of employee commitment. These will be used to provide a theory-based, conceptual framework to guide future OC research. Accordingly, this study will define OC. Furthermore, it will provide a comprehensive review of the OC literature and offer an agenda for future research.

### **Theoretical Foundation of OC**

OC is a spontaneous, organic process that develops through the association of an individual to an organization (e.g., Allen & Meyer, 1990, Messner, 2013; Meyer & Allen, 1991). It can be based on various stages or levels of commitment with antecedents that are based on an individual's perception of loyalty. The commitment of employees to an organization is essential because it affects their engagement in the organization and contributes to their retention (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Ghazzawi, 2008; Tuna Ghazzawi, Tuna, & Catir, 2011). Employees are more willing to invest in their work when they feel that the organization supports their psychological need to feel safe and supported (Kahn, 1990; Maslow, 1958). Employees who are committed also have a greater sense of job satisfaction, which may be a predictor of engagement (Ghazzawi & Smith, 2009; Nelson & Quick, 2008; Toor & Ofori, 2009; Tuna et al., 2011).

Among others, Nelson and Quick (2008) and Tuna et al. (2016) note that how strongly an individual identifies with an organization is a predictor of the individual's OC. Employees who are committed have a sense of purpose that

may help them to advance organizational goals and objectives (Tuna et al., 2011). These researchers also connected OC to social identity theory, which is a person's sense of identity as it relates to the group or organization to which they belong. This theory demonstrates relevance of OC to the organization's external image or perceived external prestige and is looked at in a positive sense. Thus, this connection plays an integral role in employees' strong identification with and commitment to an organization (see Alias et al., 2013; Carmeli, et al., 2006; Demir, 2011; Tuna et al., 2016). Others have classified OC into attitudinal and behavioral commitment. While *attitudinal commitment* focuses on the process by which people come to think about their relationship with the organization, *behavioral commitment* relates to the process by which individuals become locked into a certain organization and the way they deal with organizational circumstances (Mowday et al., 1982). See Figure 1 for an illustration.

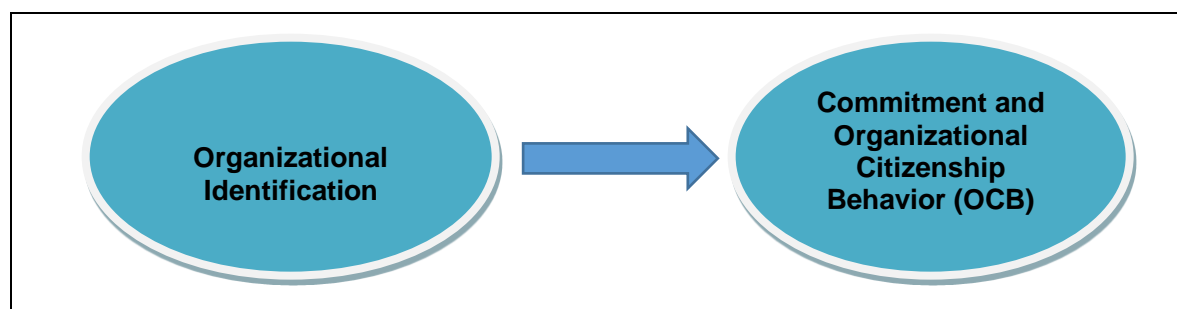


Figure 1. Organizational identification and its impact on workplace attitude

Initial OC studies focused on the concept as a single-dimensional construct (e.g., Alutto, Hrebiniak, & Alonso, 1973; Becker, 1960; Porter et al., 1974). Others held that individuals were committed to an organization only so far as they held a particular position in the company. Foundational to this theory is the economic exchange behavioral contract between the employee and organization (Becker, 1960). Because commitment is based on a hidden investment that is personally valued by an employee, this type of commitment is referred to as a *side-bet* (Becker, 1960). On the other hand, loyalty is contingent upon an employee perceiving his or her position as being adequately compensated, regardless of other factors (Alutto et al., 1973; Becker, 1960; Singh & Gupta, 2015). The investment by an employee is subject to certain perceived individual costs that

would make it more difficult for a person to exhibit a consistent pattern of behaviors, particularly, maintaining loyalty to the organization (Becker, 1960). If such individuals were offered other opportunities or alternative benefits, they would be willing to leave despite other factors (Becker, 1960; Singh & Gupta, 2015).

While the side-bet theory was later abandoned as a leading theory on commitment, the close relationship between a perceived investment by the employee and organizational loyalty affected most of the later conceptualizations of commitment (Singh & Gupta, 2015; WeiBo, Kaur, & Jun, 2010). Side-bet theory was referred to in later studies, particularly in Meyer and Allen's (1997) scale, and in the development of the continuance dimension of OC theory (WeiBo et al., 2010).

### **The Exchange Theory of OC**

The understanding of employees' psychological attachment to an organization based on one's attitude, organizational identification or involvement, and loyalty is imperative to understanding OC (Porter et al., 1974). Porter et al. (1974) further developed the idea of employee attitude as a perspective that includes either a psychological or an affective relationship between an employee and an organization, which is dependent upon an employee's identification with, and involvement in, an organization. This theoretical conceptualization became known as the *exchange theory of employee commitment* (Porter et al., 1974; Singh & Gupta, 2015). Porter et al. define *employee commitment* as "an attachment to the organization, characterized by the intention to remain in it; an identification with the values and goals of the organization; and a willingness to exert extra effort on its behalf" (604). Individuals consider whether their personal goals and values align to those of the organization, and if so, there is a greater likelihood of loyalty and attachment of the individual to the organization (Porter et al., 1974).

Similarly, while side-bet commitment (Becker, 1960) is both a normative and calculative consideration of an employee, it is influenced by psychological factors outside of economic compensation (Mowday et al., 1982). An individual will remain committed until certain situational pressures create a need to conduct a cost-benefit analysis to leave the organization (Mowday et al., 1982). This

behavioral aspect is unique to each individual and cannot be adequately accounted for when determining long-term employee commitment to an organization (Mowday et al., 1982). In 1984, Meyer and Allen conducted a study to compare past methodologies used in testing the side-bet theory. Prior to then, the most common way to test the side-bet theory was to show an increase in commitment as side bets increased (Meyer & Allen, 1984). The conflict in Meyer and Allen's hypothesis was that correlations in the former methods of testing Becker's (1960) side-bet theory were subject to alternate interpretations (Cohen & Lowenberg, 1990). Most studies pointed to *continuance commitment*, defined as the extent to which an employee feels committed to an organization as a construct of his or her compensation (Meyer & Allen, 1984). However, *affective commitment*, defined as the positive identification with, attachment to, and involvement with an organization, could be shown as a possible better explanation (Meyer & Allen, 1984; Singh & Gupta, 2015).

To test these alternate interpretations, two smaller studies using the same measures were administered as part of Meyer and Allen's (1984) larger study. While the first study was administered to students, the second study was administered to full-time employees. The participants in the first study were 64 male and female introductory psychology students, voluntarily participating as part of a course (Meyer & Allen, 1984). The students were tested as they answered a questionnaire utilizing a 2x2 between-subjects design with factors consisting of high or low continuance commitment and high or low affective commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1984). Continuance commitment was manipulated by detailing side-bets, or investments, while affective commitment was manipulated by offering information about the provision, or lack thereof, of a sense of personal comfort and importance (Meyer & Allen, 1984). The study employed a three-point response format; both the 15-item Ritzer and Trice (1969) scale and the Hrebiniak and Alutto (1972) 4-item scale were included due to their use in prior years as the scale for the measure of commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1984).

In the second study, Meyer and Allen (1984) distributed 229 questionnaires to all full-time employees, at various job levels, within four administrative departments at a Canadian university. While the participants were asked to identify their age group and tenure at the university, the measures of commitment were the same as in the first study (Meyer & Allen, 1984). Of the questionnaires distributed, 130 were completed and returned (Meyer & Allen, 1984). After separately analyzing the data from both studies, and then cross-comparing the results, Meyer and Allen (1984) noted that the instruments used in testing the side-bet theory may not have fit the initial conception that Becker had for measuring commitment. Both the Ritzer and Trice (1969) and Hrebiniak and Alutto scales (1972) were shown to be influenced more by affective commitment than by continuance commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1984). Further, the data revealed that factors such as age and tenure do not seem to be helpful as side-bet indicators (Meyer & Allen, 1984). As a result of the study, Meyer and Allen viewed employee commitment as being two-dimensional. The first dimension, referred to as the *affective dimension*, is the positive identification with, attachment to, and involvement with the organization (Mahal, 2012; Meyer & Allen, 1984). The second dimension, referred to as the *continuance dimension*, is the extent to which an employee feels committed to his or her organization as a construct of his or her compensation (Meyer & Allen, 1984; Singh & Gupta, 2015).

In 1990, Allen and Meyer added a third dimension to employee commitment, referred to as *normative commitment*. Allen and Meyer (1990) define *normative commitment* as the feelings of obligation engendered in an individual based on perceived attachment to organizational goals or loyalty to a profession. The three-dimensional model of employee commitment was then established (Jaros, 2007).

Concurrent to the theory development of Allen and Meyer (1990), O'Reilly (1989) defines OC as an individual's psychosocial connection to an organization, which includes an employee's job involvement, loyalty to the mission or goals of the job or the profession, and willingness to exert further effort on behalf of the organization. If an employee accepted that his or her personal values were adequately reflected in the work of the organization, there was a greater likelihood of remaining loyal to the company over longer periods of time (O'Reilly

& Chatman, 1986; WeiBo et al., 2010). This second multidimensional theory of commitment based on psychological attachment, rather than just economic reward, still demonstrates limitations in terms of quantifying and predicting human behaviors (Faloye, 2014; O'Reilly & Chatman, 1986).

### **OC as a Multi-Dimensional Construct**

It was not until 1991, when Meyer and Allen (1991) re-conceptualized their view of the dimensions of commitment, that they coined the term *organizational commitment*. In this review, Meyer and Allen define *commitment* as a multidimensional construct that indicates the relative strength of an individual's identification with, involvement in, and loyalty to a particular organization (Faloye, 2014; Meyer & Allen, 1991).

Vandenberg and Self (1993) and Vandenberg, Self, and Seo (1994) also identify OC as a multidimensional construct, and define four forms of commitment: affective, continuance, temporal, and identification. The authors found there were significant differences in OC, particularly in affective and continuance commitment, when evaluated during different timeframes, particularly before and after entry into the organization (Vandenberg & Self, 1993; Vandenberg et al., 1994). While Vandenberg and Self did not significantly redefine OC, they found that individuals in different organizational career stages experienced varying levels of psychological as well as economic attachment (Singh & Gupta, 2015).

### **The Three-Dimensional Model of OC: Affective, Normative, and Continuance Commitment**

In Allen and Meyer's (1990) model, there are three dimensions of OC, as shown in Figure 2: affective commitment (AC), normative commitment (NC), and continuance commitment (CC). The three dimensions are based on the attitudes and perceptions of individual employees (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Meyer and Allen (1991) note that the separate dimensions of OC are based on the perceptions of employees' loyalty to the organization, such as turnover intentions, on-the-job behavior, and employee well-being.

In 1997, Meyer and Allen reviewed their 1991 definition of OC. They acknowledge that there are significant correlations between affective commitment and normative commitment. They also acknowledge when making accurate predictions of OC, using just affective and normative dimensions is not always possible (Meyer & Allen, 1997). The *three-dimensional model* of affective, normative, and continuance commitment includes a psychological state that links the employee to the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997; Singh & Gupta, 2015). The three dimensions represent different psychological states of an individual employee, and it is possible to develop independent measures for each dimension. The degree to which an employee is committed to the goals or vision of an organization, whether AC, NC, or CC, is found to be a predictor of the decision of the employee to either stay with or leave the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

**Affective Commitment (AC).** Allen and Meyer (1990) define AC as “an emotional attachment to the organization such that the strongly committed individual identifies with, is involved in, and enjoys membership within the organization” (2). Individuals remain within an organization largely because they want to (Allen & Meyer, 1990). According to Meyer and Allen (1991), the first of three dimensions of organizational commitment refer to the affective attachment of the employee to the organization. AC is determined by an employee’s personal choice to remain committed to the organization via some emotional identification with the organization (Singh & Gupta, 2015). AC is a positive attitude toward the organization (Singh & Gupta, 2015). Mahal (2012) also notes that an individual’s attitude is directly related to whatever personal values they bring to the organization. How individuals identify and involve themselves within an organization exemplifies the relative strength of AC (Faloye, 2014).

The OC model of Meyer and Allen (1997) indicates that AC is largely influenced by several factors, such as job challenges facing the individual, role clarity provided by the organization, direct clarity of goals and a degree of manageable difficulty in reaching goals, receptiveness by management for feedback, peer

cohesion, equity of opportunity and compensation, perceived personal importance, and timely and constructive feedback.

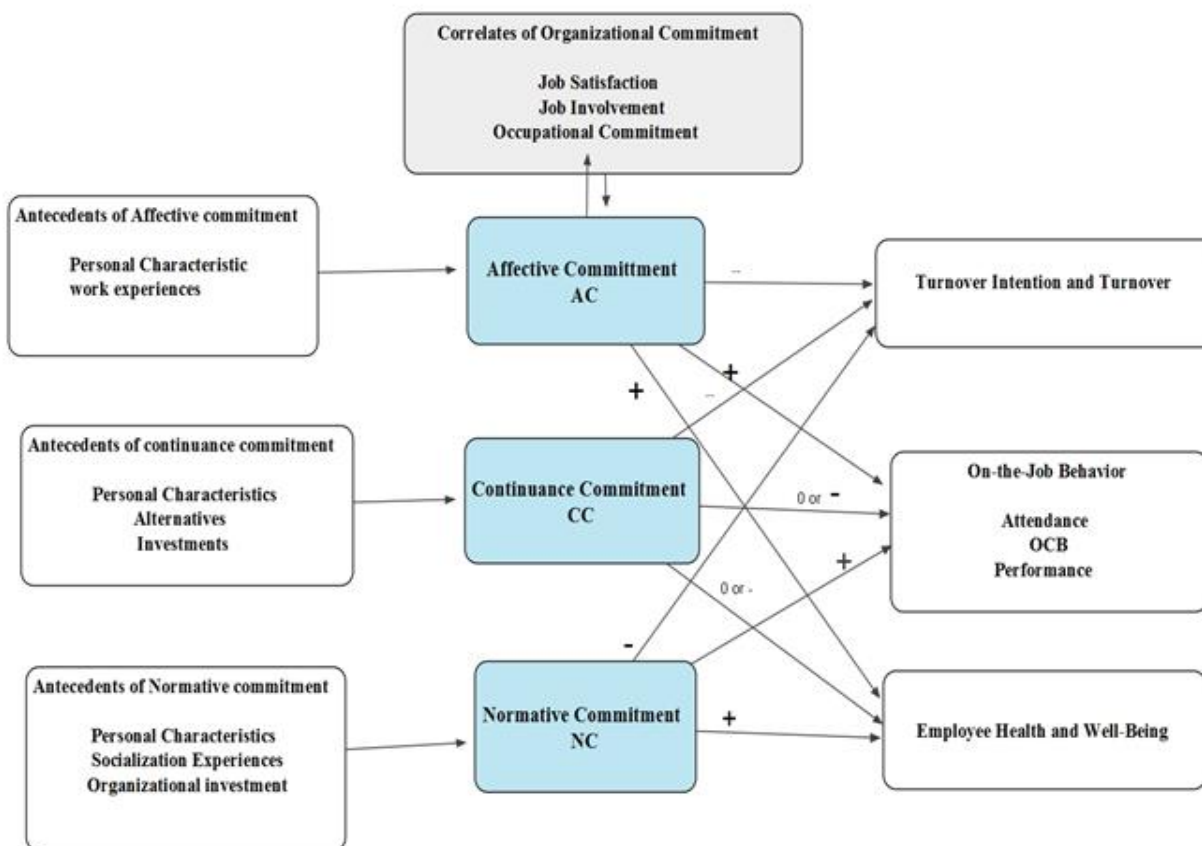


Figure 2. A three-component model of organizational commitment  
 Reproduced with permission from “Affective, Continuance, and Normative Commitment to the Organization: A Meta-Analysis of Antecedents, Correlates, and Consequences,” J. P. Meyers, D. J. Stanley, L. Herscovitch, and L. Topolnysky, 2002, *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 61(1), p. 22. Copyright 2002 by Elsevier.

AC development involves identification with organizational goals as well as internalization of organizational policy and culture (Beck & Wilson, 2000; Singh & Gupta, 2015). An individual’s affective attachment to an organization is based primarily upon his or her identification with, along with a desire to establish a relationship with, an organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). Once an individual becomes embedded in the organization, he or she experiences internalization, in which there is a perceived alignment of goals and values held by both the



individual and the organization. In general, AC is concerned with the extent to which an individual identifies with the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

AC denotes an emotional attachment to, identification with, and involvement in the organization and is considered the primary concern for organizations wishing to retain employees in an economy centered on knowledge acquisition and transfer (Meyer & Allen, 1984; Singh & Gupta, 2015). While employees may develop all three forms of OC at different points in their association with an organization, most researchers (e.g., Iverson & Buttigieg, 1999; Mowday et al., 1979) generally consider AC to be the most valuable in terms of predicting long-term retention of valuable employee assets (Singh & Gupta, 2015). AC has also been the most consistent and strongest predictor of positive organizational outcomes, such as work effort and performance (Luchak & Gellatly, 2007; Singh & Gupta, 2015). AC has also been used to judge organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB; Mahal, 2012; Mathieu & Zajac, 1990; Meyer et al., 2002). However, AC has also been a negative predictor of higher levels of absenteeism, workplace stress, and turnover (Iverson & Buttigieg, 1999; Singh & Gupta, 2015; Vanderberghe, Bentein, & Stinglhamber, 2004; Wasti, 2005).

**Continuance Commitment (CC).** The second dimension, as developed by Meyer and Allen (1991), relates to a cost–benefit analysis of an employee, such as the loss of economic investments and difficulties in finding a new job. Whether or not an employee remains with a company is evaluated in terms of the perceived costs of leaving. Influenced by tenure, positional authority, or length of service, employees choose to remain committed because they feel they have too much to lose by leaving (Singh & Gupta, 2015). CC can be regarded as a contractual attachment to the organization (Beck & Wilson, 2000). An individual's association with an organization is based on an ongoing assessment of economic benefits gained by remaining with the organization (Faloye, 2014). Organizational members develop commitment because of positive extrinsic rewards obtained without necessarily identifying with an organization's goals and values (Faloye, 2014).

Research by Mahal (2012) suggests that the CC dimension of employee OC is often the primary factor in an employee's cost-benefit analysis of remaining with the organization. Nevertheless, both previous and current research has found no significant relationship between CC and employee retention (Faloye, 2014; Meyer, Allen, & Smith, 1993). However, in Faloye's (2014) study, 144 paramilitary police employees were asked to gauge which dimension of OC has the greatest influence on the decision to leave an organization, and CC did not appear to be related to employee retention. Work experiences in these paramilitary police professions were found to have a strong correlation to OC, which supports the idea that employers who focus on enhancing an employee's work experience have a better chance of encouraging long-term commitment (Irving & Meyer, 1994). Meyer et al. (2002) also found a pattern of consistent evidence that organizational support in the form of HR policies and practices directly or indirectly influences the development of OC.

The strength of CC is determined by the perceived costs associated with leaving the organization (Meyer & Allen, 1984). If the perception exists that the costs of leaving are too high, then the individual is likely to remain (Mahal, 2012). Individuals may consider the costs of leaving too high solely because they are attached to accumulated investments they could lose, such as pension plans, seniority, or organization-specific skills (Mahal, 2012). Conversely, when given better alternatives, with lower perceived costs, employees may leave the organization. The need felt by individuals to stay within an organization are profit based, associated with continued services, while the termination of benefits is a cost associated with leaving (Mahal, 2012).

**Normative Commitment (NC).** The final dimension proposed by Meyer and Allen (1991), NC reflects an employee's sense of commitment due to a feeling of obligation. This is less a personal commitment, but rather a perceived societal expectation, in which one remains loyal to the employer who provides compensation for services rendered (Singh & Gupta, 2015). Messner (2013) describes NC as the work behavior of individuals, guided by a sense of duty, obligation, and loyalty toward an organization. Organizational members remain

committed based on moral reasons (Iverson & Buttigieg, 1999; Singh & Gupta, 2015). The normative committed employee stays in an organization because he or she perceives it as morally right to do so, regardless of how much status or satisfaction the organization provides over the years (Messner, 2013).

Allen and Meyer (1990) note that NC, while the less common of the dimensions, is an equally viable look at commitment. Distinctive from AC (emotionally motivated) and CC (profit motivated), NC (obligation motivated) has been found to share many antecedents and consequences as with its counterparts, particularly in its correlations with AC (Meyer et al., 2002). The strength of NC is determined by the rules an individual accepts and the reciprocal relationship between an organization and its employees (Abreu, Cunha, & Rebouças, 2013). The concept of reciprocity is based upon social exchange theory, which suggests that a person receiving a benefit is under a strong normative obligation or rule to repay the benefit in some way (McDonald & Makin, 2000; Singh & Gupta, 2015). This implies that individuals remain committed to an organization from a perceived obligation to repay the organization for investing in them, for example, through training and development (Singh & Gupta, 2015).

Bhat and Maheshwari (2005) further define OC as an employee's willingness to do more than simply comply with a basic job description. Bhat and Maheshwari examined the commitment of health officials in Chhattisgarh, India. They aimed to determine the status of professional commitment, defined by the authors as "a person's loyalty to the profession and willingness to exert himself to uphold its values and goals. A professional such as a doctor may just as well provide health care out of his concern for the profession alone" (3). They also sought to determine OC, along with the characteristics of HR management practices, in the health sector and to discover how these management practices link to OC. Using a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methodologies, a focus group discussion was conducted using six district health officials and four officers in the state directorate in the exploratory study. Based on the group discussions and additional interviews with the participants, a questionnaire was prepared and

distributed to 75 district and state officials, with the objective of assessing relevant issues facing management. Of the distributed questionnaires, 70 were returned, representing an overall view of senior officials throughout the district. The questionnaires consisted of 62 variables containing multiple items, each item measured using a five-point Likert-type scale. Bhat and Maheshwari developed commitment scales based on the three-dimensional model (affective, normative, and continuance) created by Meyer and Allen (1991), due to its wide acceptance.

Based on the findings of Bhat and Maheshwari's (2005) study, the following elements were determined necessary for an organization to obtain affective AC:

- cooperation between an individual and colleagues/higher management;
- the ability to contribute input and offer consultation to an organization's HR department, particularly with regard to the hiring, or transferring out, of employees within a participant's district;
- the ability for an individual to grow professionally and find career development opportunities within an organization considered fair by an individual; and
- a perceived correlation between worker performance and rewards.

In conclusion, Bhat and Maheshwari (2005) suggest that the extra efforts put in by employees above their basic job descriptions is tied to a higher degree of value of the structural goals as well as to a greater desire to retain membership in the organization.

Recently, there has been greater interest in NC, which is most commonly linked to *professional commitment*, defined as the psychological attachment to and identification with one's profession (Singh & Gupta, 2015). Those individuals with stronger professional commitment identified with professional goals and would put in more substantial effort to uphold or support the ideals and goals of a profession (Singh & Gupta, 2015). Professional commitment is correlated with improved job performance, attention to service, and job involvement (Farris & Cordero, 2002; Kwon & Banks, 2004; Singh & Gupta, 2015). This is particularly true for certain types of professions, such as those in the service industries, public health and safety, and education sectors (Singh & Gupta, 2015).

Allen and Meyer (1990) developed an eight-item measure of NC, and Meyer et al. (1993) subsequently developed a revision of the same measure of NC along with a parallel six-item measure of occupational commitment. The revision was extensive and motivated by two considerations: to eliminate items that might more appropriately be considered antecedents of NC, and to measure an individual's obligation more generally, including obligation based on the need to reciprocate for benefits received from the organization (Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010).

Common to the three dimensions of OC is the understanding that commitment is based upon the psychological state of an individual and his or her attitude toward an organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990). The patterns of behavior for employees in both the AC and NC dimensions are similar (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Meyer and Allen (1991) did not remove NC from their definition of OC, but used the relationship between NC and AC, and the relationship between NC and CC, to measure the effect of NC for individual employees' commitment to organizational goals. Meyer and Allen (1997) determined that AC, NC, and CC are separate dimensions of commitment.

### **Temporal and Affective Dimensions of OC**

In an effort to enhance the strengths of current approaches to OC, while curtailing its limits, Cohen (2007) introduced a theory of a two-dimensional model for OC, consisting of a temporal dimension and an affective dimension. *Temporal commitment* includes both commitment propensity, which develops before an individual joins an organization, and OC, which develops only after joining the organization (Cohen, 2007). *Affective commitment* is the psychological construct that forms the basis of commitment (Cohen, 2007). Cohen made a distinction between affective commitment based on instrumental considerations, or the general expectation of benefits and rewards for job performance, and affective commitment based on psychological attachment, which includes a moral obligation to the organization. Cohen indicates that the nature of commitment is also two-dimensional when related to pre-entry and post-entry commitments and is strongly tied to and part of the motivational process. Commitment is based upon an individual's evaluation of the cost of leaving an organization, referred to

as continuance commitment, and the benefits of staying with an organization, referred to as instrumental commitment (Cohen, 2007).

Case in point, Meyer et al. (2002) note that the two-dimensional model of OC has a high correlation between affective commitment (AC) and normative commitment (NC), through their distinctions between affective and continuance commitment. Cohen (2007), on the other hand, redefines NC as a function of the temporal dimension, which could account for the changes in AC over time, but did not separate continuance commitment from AC. The two-dimensional model of OC does not effectively measure continuance commitment, and the psychological constructs of continuance might be significant in determining OC in particular individuals (Singh & Gupta, 2005).

### **The Predictors of OC**

*Social exchange theory* (e.g., Blau, 1964) attempts to explain the social interdependence created in the workplace and how employees form an attachment to an organization. According to the theory, in any social interaction, multiple inherent factors predetermine how individuals react in given social constructs (Blau, 1964; Markovits, Boer, & van Dick, 2014; Wiener, 1982). These factors include intrinsic personal characteristics of an employee based on age, gender, or length of service as well as opportunities for achievement, creativity, and personal advancement. There are also extrinsic factors that relate to an employee's work role and job experience, such as remuneration, management policies, physical conditions, and job security (Cooper-Hakim & Viswesvaran, 2005; Markovits et al., 2014; Spector, 1997).

Broadly defined, *social exchange theory* attempts to explain underlying relationships that determine the exchange of reciprocal social services, which may range from simple to complex processes (Blau, 1964). It is these relationships that are at the heart of the psychological processes, such as attachment, whether it be to a person, an organization, or an idea (Blau, 1964; Miao, Newman, Schwarz, & Xu, 2014). Attachment leads to positive work attributes, such as OC, that contribute to employees' personal growth as both

workers and as individuals (Miao et al., 2014). See Figure 3 on the next page for predictors of employee commitment.

OC can be the foundation of self-realization for an individual and may have an impact on other job-related outcomes, such as turnover, absenteeism, job effort, job role, and performance (Jung & Yoon, 2012; Ghazzawi, 2008; Tuna et al., 2011). A job role that is ill-defined or ambiguous may weaken commitment to the organization, and promotional opportunities could also enhance or diminish OC depending on an individual's perception of his or her importance (Jung & Yoon, 2016). In addition, other job factors that have an impact on commitment are levels of responsibility and autonomy (Jung & Yoon, 2012). Cartwright and Holmes (2006) found that when an employee felt the work had meaning, in conjunction with higher levels of responsibility and autonomy with a given job, a higher level of commitment was expressed. Accordingly, the key predictors of OC are described below.

***Personal Characteristics of Employees.*** The primary determining factor for commitment is linked to employees' roles in the organization, placing emphasis on employees' perceptions of experience, time, and effort put into an organization, mixed with the accumulation of benefits gained from their investment (Irshad & Naz, 2011). Employees' personalities also play a role in their organizational commitment (Irshad & Naz, 2011). Irshad and Naz (2011) define *personality* as the unique internal and external aspects of a person's character that influence behavior in different situations. The measurement of emotional, motivational, interpersonal, and attitudinal characteristics, as distinguished from abilities, are attributes that are unique to an individual based on age, gender, education, or experience.

OC is also affected by employees' personal characteristics, such as age and gender, as well as years of service (Meyer & Allen, 1997). Mowday (1999) and Meyer and Herscovitch (2001) found that there are distinct behavioral differences (e.g., organizational loyalty and compliance, sportsmanship, self-development, and civic virtue) for employees with different levels of commitment.

Demographics that include age are most often studied, as this is considered a key indicator in the work of Meyer and Allen (1991, 1997) and Meyer et al. (1993). Gursoy, Chi, and Karadag (2013) and Gursoy, Maier, and Chi (2008) both conclude that the age of a worker influences how attached he or she becomes to various aspects of the workplace. Studies indicate that there are age-related variations in the need for recognition, status in the workplace, and idealism in the work (Rousseau & Greller, 1994; Singh & Gupta, 2015).

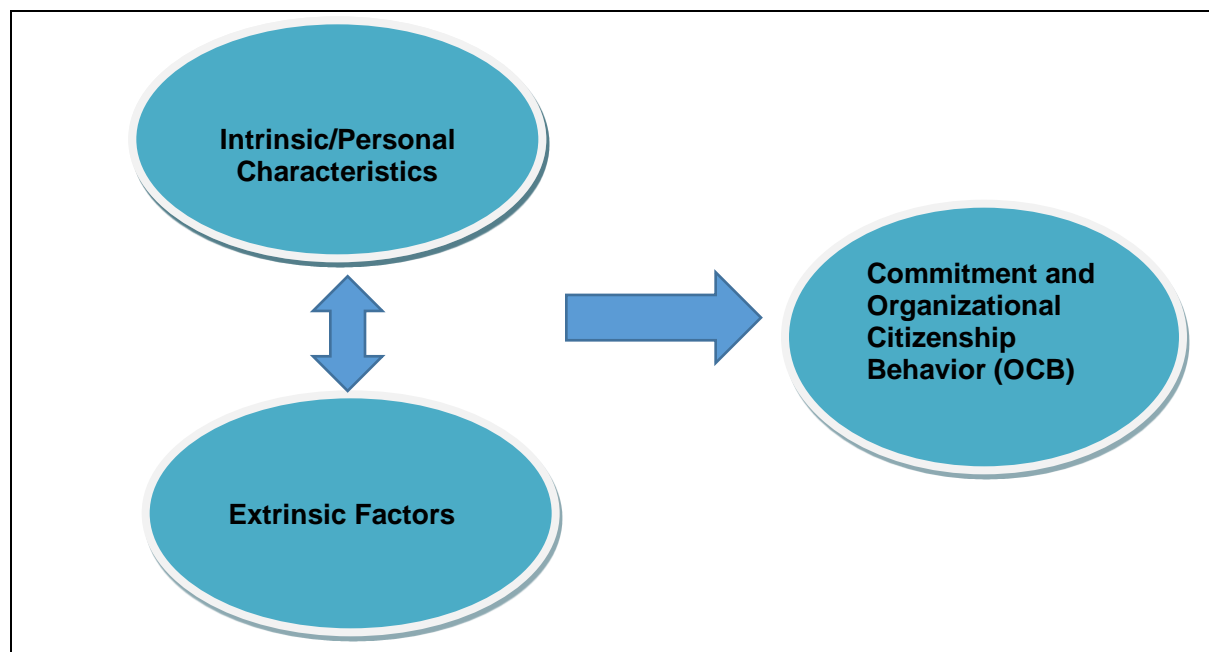


Figure 3. Predictors of employee commitment

Singh and Gupta (2015) conducted a generational study to quantify the connection between age, work experience, and OC. This research was conducted using a cross-sectional, survey-based design of 500 employees in the 13 largest organizations in India. Such a construct may not have practical application outside of India where cultural norms regarding workplace affiliation are significantly different than those in North America (Singh & Gupta, 2015). However, because India does not have the same generational cohort identification as the United States, the data become more significant. The study used a Likert-scale questionnaire that the researchers based on the Allen and Meyer (1990) instrument to measure job involvement, team commitment, and professional commitment (Singh & Gupta, 2015). The Allen and Meyer scale was



used to measure employee commitment as it relates to affective, normative, and continuance dimensions of commitment.

Singh and Gupta's (2015) findings indicate that even though employees exhibited higher rates of commitment based on team or professional affiliation and loyalty, there were significant differences between generations in terms of how those affiliations are perceived. Older employees (aged 45 and above) tended to be highest in AC. Those in the middle years (aged 23 to 45), while high in AC, were highest in NC and were more involved in professional as well as organizational goals. The youngest group (aged 23 and below) were lowest in AC but higher in NC, only to the extent they were invested in their profession. This implies that younger workers are committed to an organization but view commitment only as a means to advance their personal professional goals (Singh & Gupta, 2015).

This was echoed in Abreu et al.'s (2013) study as well. Their study showed that employees who are younger (aged 25 or less) and have less than 10 years of service, an individual follows his or her own professional commitments and is less committed to long-term service with the organization. Therefore, demographics are important in the formation of OC, but could also be a determinant of the extent to which an employee will commit in the long term (Abreu et al., 2013).

Rhoades and Eisenberger (2002) note that demographic information needs to be considered as part of an evaluation of OC, as employees' values and experiences are often related to gender, age, and length of service. The importance of the role of affective dispositions (personality traits) as part of demographics in shaping an individual's work-related attitudes has gained support as an antecedent of work attitudes (Abreu et al., 2013; Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972). In their meta-analytical studies, Judge, Heller, and Mount (2002) and Thoresen, Kaplan, Barsky, Warren, and de Chermont (2003) found that job satisfaction and OC are correlated, both positively with extraversion and negatively with psychoneurosis. According to Irshad and Naz (2011):

Individuals high in positive affect (extraverts) tend to be more committed and to express more favourable attitudes to their work, and individuals high in negative affect (neurotics) tend to be less committed and to express less favourable attitudes to their work. (39)

Allen and Meyer (1990) wrote their seminal paper on the multidimensional construct of OC, with a focus on testing the correlations, or interrelationships between AC, NC, and CC, as they applied to OC. Two studies were conducted as part of the overall research. The first study focused on development of measures, using collected data from nonunionized, full-time employees from two manufacturing firms and a university. The second study focused on antecedents of commitment using collected data from nonunionized, full-time employees in three organizations: a university library, a retail department store, and a hospital. The questionnaire for the second study included the affective, normative, and continuance scales from the first study, along with proposed antecedents of affective, normative, and continuance components. A canonical analysis of the data was conducted to determine the link between each of the three commitment measures and the hypothesized variables proposed to be their antecedents.

On these studies, Allen and Meyer (1990) included characteristics described by Steers (1977), including personal characteristics, job characteristics, and work experiences. They found that measures of the relationships between these variables were neither strong nor consistent. However, Meyer and Allen (1997) indicate that there seemed to be a greater likelihood for commitment in those employees who were older and female than among other groups (Singh & Gupta, 2015).

However, Mathieu and Zajac (1990) suggest that there is a strong link between perceived competence and AC and that the age of an employee has a weak, yet significant, link to AC. Their study results suggest that role ambiguity or role conflict contributes to poor AC. However, gender differences in commitment may be due to different work characteristics and experiences that are linked to gender (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

Personal factors, such as marital status, religion, and a parent's occupation can play a significant role in OC, especially if an individual has time, financial gains, or other benefits invested in an organization that would be lost if he or she left

(Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972). Further, demographic considerations such as gender and age affect the values and considerations employees hold when evaluating OC (Abreu et al., 2013). When weighed against other factors such as work experience and role-related factors, however, personal factors do not maintain the same level of importance to individuals (Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972). It is the role-related features, such as length of time in an organization, satisfaction or dissatisfaction with an organization, role tension, and ambiguity, that are viewed by employees as primarily important in the development of OC (Hrebiniak & Alutto, 1972).

***Employee Role-Related and Work Experience Factors.*** According to Allen and Meyer (1990), there are specific aspects to the employee role that contribute to AC. These include peer cohesion (the bond between employees), personal importance (the importance to the organization an employee is made to feel), feedback (reviews regarding employee work performances are provided), and overall interaction with peers and supervisors. The emotional, or affective, attachment an employee feels toward an organization, including the way in which they identify with, are involved with, and enjoy membership within that organization, has been the most popular approach in studies of OC (Buchanan, 1974; Kanter, 1968; Mowday et al., 1979). In addition, the work experience antecedents, specifically those experiences that most fulfill the psychological needs of employees to feel comfortable in an organization, provide the strongest evidence as antecedents of AC (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

Stallworth (2004) studied the benefit of conceptualizing OC using a multidimensional view in the realm of accounting as well as examining the varied range of antecedent variables related to each of the three dimensions of OC. Stallworth found that AC is generally higher when there is equity in the assignment of overtime, frequency of socializing with superiors, status with peers, likelihood of promotion, and when a role model or mentor also displays AC to the organization. Other work relationships, such as teams or groups, could also have an effect on OC (Wasti & Can, 2008). Organizational members can demonstrate commitment when they are able to find value through work

relationships (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Individuals in an organization are more likely to commit to the organization when work relationships are formed that reflect interdependent and mutual respect (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990).

According to Sisodia and Das (2013), an individual's role or job is of paramount importance in increasing OC due to the following factors:

- Skill variety: the extent to which the job requires multiple high-level skills
- Task identity: the degree to which a person is in charge of completing an identifiable piece of work from start to finish
- Task significance: a person's job substantially affects other people's work, health, or well-being
- Feedback: the degree to which people learn how effective they are at work
- Autonomy: the degree of individual choice involved in a job

The organization is a workplace environment built upon working relationships; one of the most significant is the supervisory relationship (Sisodia & Das, 2013). According to Abreu et al. (2013), a member of the leadership team in the organization could affect OC either positively or negatively. A positive supervisory relationship depends on how work-related practices, such as performance management, are implemented in the organization (Miao et al., 2014). When individuals believe the supervisory relationship to be fair and consistent in its practices, then higher levels of commitment are shown (Kasemsap, 2013).

An individual's working environment and experiences related to the work environment are additional factors when considering OC (Kasemsap, 2013). One of the common working environmental conditions that may have a positive impact on OC is partial ownership, including either monetary return or enhanced investiture in the company (Kasemsap, 2013; Meyer & Allen, 1997). Ownership could create in employees a sense of importance; they would feel part of the decision-making process (Wasti & Can, 2008). This is true regardless of the employee's level in the company. For example, Al-Qatawneh (2014) found that employees who participate in budget decision making had higher levels of OC. Other factors within the work environment that may affect OC are work practices

in recruitment and selection, performance appraisal, promotions, and management style (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

Other studies have found that an organizational culture that includes shared values, particularly in organizational decision making, is essential for establishing employee behaviors (e.g., Heskett, 2011; Messner, 2013). Heskett (2011) suggests that *corporate culture*, or the way we do things, is often a greater determinant of commitment than other predictors of behavior. Thus, organizational policy that encourages employee involvement could help satisfy an employee's desire for empowerment and demand for a commitment to organizational goals.

Meyer and Allen (1997) contend that understanding the pattern of relationships among work context, intrinsic motivation, job characteristics, and their corresponding affective reactions is important because new policies and procedures are constantly being added to organizations in an attempt to try to influence or enhance organizational-level commitment. Skill variety, supervisory satisfaction, job satisfaction, and feedback have strong links to intrinsic motivation for employees, which, in turn, create OC (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

### **Organizational Ethics, Culture, and Practices: The Impact on OC**

Organizations may have many values that guide product and service quality, advertising content, selection of distribution channels, and treatment of customers (Miao et al., 2014). However, underpinning all of these values are corporate ethical values (Miao et al., 2014). If OC is to be more than a psychosocial construct and social exchange, then ethical considerations would need to be examined as well (Miao et al., 2014).

Hall (1992) defines *ethics* simply as “knowing what ought to be done, and having the will to do it” (12–13). According to Hall, to create a workplace that excels beyond mediocrity, properly applying ethics, including doing what is considered right by workers, is fundamental for an employee's need for a foundation of pride and motivation. These values help establish and maintain the standards that delineate the right things to do and the things that are worth doing (Jansen & Von Glinow, 1985).

In turn, such ethical corporate standards influence an individual's choices and actions that are desirable to organizations (Fard & Karimi, 2015). More specifically, when the ethical standards or values of an organization are widely shared by its members as part of the corporate culture, organizational success may be enhanced (Messner, 2013). Virtually all well-performing organizations have had at their cores a well-defined set of shared values, particularly ethical values (Yoon & Park, 2011). In all balanced exchange relationships, two sides are involved, each with something of value, freedom to agree or disagree, and the ability to communicate what is being offered (Messner, 2013). Under Meyer and Allen's (1991) dimensions of AC, CC, and NC, organizations will satisfy individuals' needs, and in return, individuals will work hard to accomplish organizational goals. The likelihood of employees being highly productive for and loyal to the organization is likely to be increased when organizations provide a culture conducive to such exchanges while simultaneously creating respectful work environments and encouraging excellent HR practices (Yoon & Park, 2011; March & Simon, 1958; Messner, 2013).

OC has been associated with many desirable organizational outcomes including satisfaction, performance, reduced turnover, and flexibility (Saeed, Waseem, Sikander, & Rizwan, 2014). When the trust between an employee and the organization is high, there is a positive correlation to job satisfaction and OC (Fard & Karimi, 2015). Messner (2013) conducted a study with the purpose of identifying the connection between OC and organizational culture among India's IT service providers due to the knowledge loss caused by high turnover rates in their offshore delivery factories. The system of shared beliefs and behaviors that add to a unique social and psychological environment within an organization is part of its organizational culture (Messner, 2013). To determine the link between an organization's commitment and culture, employees in an Indian offshore service provider and an Indian offshore delivery unit of a multinational consulting company were provided an online questionnaire, which was part of a larger upskilling activity with the Intercultural Communication and Collaboration Appraisal framework introduced in 2012 by Messner and Schafer.

The results of Messner's 2013 study indicated that as the ethical culture of an organization improved, employees' feelings of pride, loyalty, and active support led to greater OC. Yoon and Park (2011) examined the same issue in a review of OC, employee satisfaction, and trust. Specifically, Yoon and Park (2011) note that ethical corporate practice was essential to the establishment of a culture of mutual respect and the highest levels of commitment. See Figure 4 on the next page for an illustration of the impact of culture and ethics on OC.

Specifically, HR practices (HRP) related to professional development and training have been shown to be significant in creating a positive sense of well-being, which contributes to an employee's investiture in an organization (Paré & Tremblay, 2007). They also contribute to overall job satisfaction and job performance (Bashir & Long, 2015; Gultek, Dodd, & Guydosh, 2006; Satterfield & Hughes, 2007). Bashir and Long's (2015) study of the relationship between perceived supervisory support and OC indicate that there is a significant relationship between availability of training, motivation to learn, coworker support for training, supervisor support for training, and the perceived benefits of training and both the affective and normative dimensions of commitment.

HRP could be instrumental in developing higher work efficiency and productivity while encouraging positive self-concept, thus promoting commitment in employees (Lin, Chen, & Chuang, 2011). In their study of 494 hospitality workers in Taiwan, Lin et al. (2011) administered a survey based on the four-level training performance evaluation scale. The survey was taken by a cross-section of workers in the golf tourism sector in which 56% of respondents were male, 49% were college educated, and 70% were between the ages of 30 and 50. The data analysis indicated that employee training and support had a direct positive influence on OC, with a standardized parameter of  $\beta_2 = 0.38$ , and a  $t$  value of 6.48.

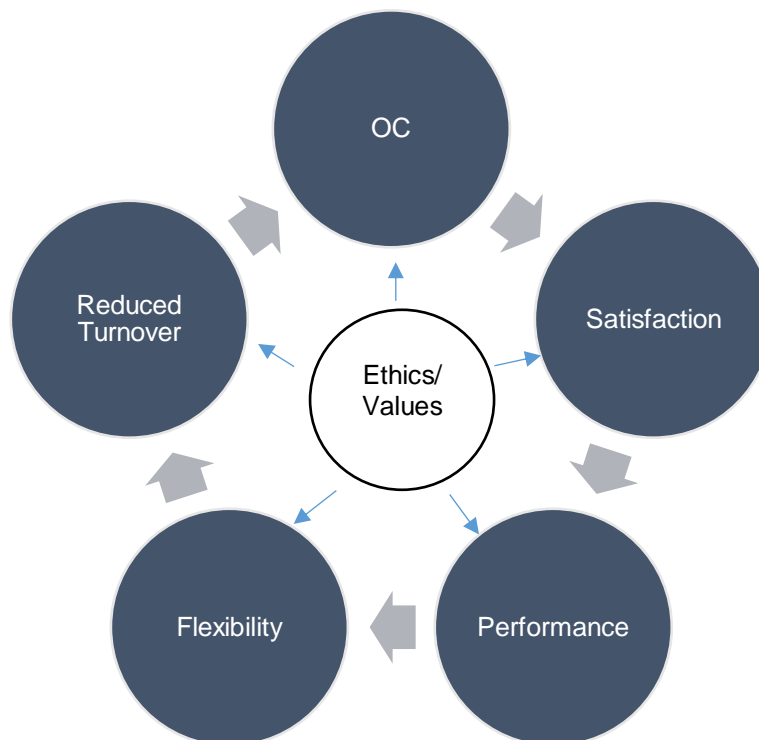


Figure 4. The impact of culture and ethics on OC

Fu (2013) studied the role of OC on the organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) of flight attendants employed by six airlines in Taiwan to analyze the role of high-performance HRP in developing positive employee engagement. The study utilized the OC scale developed by Meyer et al. (1993) and measured both affective and continuance commitment dimensions on a five-point Likert scale. Survey respondents included 355 flight attendants and supervisors. Using a cross-level analysis with hierarchical linear modeling, the results showed that when flight attendants' AC was stronger, they were more likely to exhibit OCB; when the airlines more actively adopted high-performance HRP, the flight attendants were also more likely to exhibit OCB; and when the airlines valued high-performance HRP, the relationship between the flight attendants' OC and their OCB was more significant.

Chalofsky and Krishna (2009) assert that if an organization wishes to maintain excellent HR management, and thus improve employee commitment, new approaches for motivation must be developed. In particular, they note that extrinsic motivation is both inefficient and of limited usefulness in the long term



(Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009). HR policy is far more effective if commitment is established through internal motives such as the meaning of work (Chalofsky & Krishna, 2009). Beukes and Botha (2013) agree that the importance of intrinsic motivation for commitment is established by doing socially meaningful work or work that is perceived to have meaning or provide a contribution to the overall good of society.

Jung and Yoon (2016) tested the concept of intrinsic motivation in their empirical research study of hospitality workers in Korea. The study was conducted in an industry noted for particular work characteristics, such as providing service to the community, and whose meaning of work is directly linked to the job. Using a self-administered survey questionnaire, more than 300 hospitality workers from a broad range of demographics and years of experience provided the research data. The results indicated that there was a positive correlation between OC and meaning of work, regardless of the worker's age, gender, education, or length of service. This suggests that employees who perceive their work as meaningful have higher levels of commitment and a greater positive mental attitude toward the work. In addition, Jung and Yoon determined that there is a link between the psychological value an individual places on his or her job that positively correlates to his or her job experience and productivity as well as motivation, which directly contributes to engagement.

### **Do Cultural Differences Impact OC?**

Evidence for the distinction between NC and AC is found in cross-cultural research. For example, Fischer and Mansell (2009) found that the correlation between AC and NC varies across cultures and is affected differently by cultural value. AC is greater in countries scoring high on individualism, whereas NC is greater in collectivist cultures (Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010). This implies that the differences between AC and NC would become more distinct as validated research was conducted in non-Western cultures (Bergman, 2006; Meyer & Parfyonova, 2010; Wasti & Önder, 2009).

The distinction between AC and NC has been further explored in two studies by Wasti and Can (2008) using 430 employees in the Turkish automotive industry.

The OC questionnaire developed by Meyer, Barak, and Vandenberghe (1996) was administered to a survey population that was largely male (79%) and generally young (83% were younger than age 30). The first study used regression analysis to examine training opportunities, empowerment, satisfaction with supervisor, and satisfaction with job security as predictors of NC. The second study was conducted with the same population utilizing a different instrument to measure not just AC and NC but also *collectivism*, defined as prioritizing the goals and objectives of the group over those of the individual, at an individual level with regard to supervisory relationships as well as relationships to coworkers. To test for variables, such as the dynamic between an individual's commitments and organizational-level outcomes, a series of hierarchical regressions were performed (Wasti & Can, 2008). The regressions on local outcomes indicated that both AC and NC to supervisors were positively associated with citizenship behaviors. In contrast, no commitment variable was significantly predictive of supervisor-oriented relational behaviors. Using a mean split on vertical collectivism and AC to organizations, it was found that when AC was low, individuals who scored low or high on vertical collectivism did not differ significantly in their turnover intentions. When AC was high, individuals exhibited higher levels of vertical collectivism and had significantly lower levels of turnover intentions ( $M = 1.78$ ) than those low on vertical collectivism ( $M = 1.99$ ). Taken together, the study indicates that commitment to the organization is a uniquely positive predictor of turnover intentions and commitment to supervisor is uniquely associated with supervisor-oriented citizenship behaviors (Wasti & Can, 2008). In conclusion, Wasti and Can's (2008) study failed to support the cultural argument. Instead, their study showed that

commitment to organization was predictive of organizational-level outcomes (e.g., turnover intentions), and commitment to supervisor was predictive of supervisor-related outcomes (e.g., citizenship towards supervisor). These findings suggest that the influence of culture may be less straightforward and may require a more sophisticated measurement of the nature of relationships and organizational characteristics in general. (404)

In a meta-analysis conducted by Meyer, Stanley, Jackson, McInnis, and Maltin (2012) on the influence of culture on the development of AC, NC, and CC, a study of research conducted in 57 countries from 1984 to 2010 was completed. These studies employed the Meyer and Allen (1991, 1997) and Meyer et al. (1993) OC scale as part of a survey process. The data collected from the meta-analysis indicated that there was a distinct difference between AC, NC, and CC as measured against collectivist versus individualistic cultures. Cultural differences among countries could explain the substantial variability in country commitment means as indicated by the results. This result indicates that there is substantial variability in country commitment that could potentially be explained by culture differences among countries. In this meta-analysis, the NC scale focuses on socialization experiences, including obligation based on the need to reciprocate for benefits received from the organization.

### **Antecedents to OC**

While researching antecedents and outcomes of AC, CC, and NC through a study of Brazilian oil and gas employees, Abreu et al. (2013) suggest that the relative importance of each of the three dimensions of OC is almost identical for the affective and normative components of commitment. Types of employment are by far the most significant antecedent variable for both AC and NC, but their influence is different. However, Abreu et al. (2013) found a significant association between personal characteristics and each of the dimensions of OC. Specifically, results found that AC was influenced most by full-time employees who had more than 10 years of service with the company and NC was influenced most by contract employees who had less than 10 years of service with the company.

Meyer and Allen (1997) note that an antecedent variable could contribute to the development of any of the dimensions of OC, depending on how it is perceived by employees. For example, training opportunities could contribute to a sense of desire, an obligation, or a need to remain with the organization, depending on whether such opportunities are viewed as an acknowledgement of organizational support, a benefit requiring contractual reciprocation, or an investment of time to acquire organization-specific skills (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

## **Organizational Commitment: A Proposed Future Research Agenda**

Given the complexity in predicting an employee's retention and the challenges facing today's organizations face in retaining their workforces, this study suggests that OC deserves much more research and analysis. The above review of literature on OC could be a source of major empirical research designed to further test this phenomenon. While the importance of all aforementioned influences on OC are worthy research topics, this study specifically suggests that future research focus more on the role of leadership and organizational contexts. Please refer to Table 1 on the next page for suggested topics.

The study suggests empirical research related to leadership, as we believe that leaders play the most pivotal roles in employees' commitment. Leadership cognition and its ability or inability to influence, fairly compensate, make strategic decisions, motivate, and set policies and practices to ensure having an ethical environment might lead to a well-performing organization and, in turn, a committed workforce. Given the common belief that power struggles and/or a change in organizational leadership have a negative effect on OC, this article also suggests that there is a need to further investigate this subject.

Regarding the contexts of the organization itself, we suggest an investigation of the determinants of the three-dimensional work attitude: commitment, satisfaction, and performance. Along the same lines, we also suggest research on the key predictors of workplace citizenship behavior.

Additionally, one of the reasons for suggesting future research on innovation is to further investigate the extent of its role on employees' commitment and whether the lack of innovation negatively influences someone's perception and therefore, commitment. Various connected topics to organizational studies relevant to commitment, including the role that commitment plays during the time of organizational challenges or decline, are also suggested. While many studies have investigated the role of demographics on OC, we suggest research on the impact that age of an organization might have on employees' commitment. Future research will provide an integration of personal and contextual/ organizational

characteristics that influence OC and might conclude with evidence of said relationship, implications, and a model relating to the subject of commitment.

**Table 1: Future OC Research Directions**

Leadership and Commitment	Organizational Contexts and Commitment
How does a top management team (TMT) affect employees' OC?	What are the key predictors of workplace citizenship behavior?
What is the impact of leadership styles and practices on employees' commitment?	Is commitment synonymous with employees' productivity? (Focus on a three-dimensional work attitude: commitment, satisfaction, and performance.)
How do TMT cognition and strategic decision making affect a firm's commitment?	What role does commitment play during organizational challenges or decline?
What is the impact of a firm's power struggles on organizational commitment?	How do innovation and success influence employees' organizational commitment?
Does a change in organizational leadership affect employee commitment?	Does the age of an organization have an impact on employees' commitment?

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Basel Al-Jabari, DBA, is the executive director for overseas operations of International American Business Training & Testing (IABTT), a global education management, technology, and policy consulting firm headquartered in Michigan, and a member of the company's board of directors. Dr. Al-Jabari is responsible for the company's international strategy and corporate operations outside the United States. He received a doctoral degree in business administration from Lawrence Technological University in Michigan, a master's degree in supply chain management and international business from La Verne University in California. Dr. Al-Jabari received the Spirit of Detroit award from Detroit's City Council for his achievements in Detroit schools and his support of the local community. He can be reached at [baseljabari@hotmail.com](mailto:baseljabari@hotmail.com).

Issam Ghazzawi, PhD, is a professor of management and Sam Walton Fellow at the University of La Verne, California. He received his PhD from the University of Pittsburgh, a Master of Labor and Human Resources (M.L.H.R.) from The Ohio State University, and

a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from Sul Ross State University. His areas of research include job satisfaction, leadership, organizational effectiveness, and organizational commitment. He has published articles and business cases in various American and foreign academic journals. He was inducted into the ULV Academy in 2017 and is the recipient of the Drs. Joy and Jack McElwee Excellence in Research Award, the Ahmad Ispahani Excellence in Teaching Award, the Young Scholars Award, the Ellsworth Johnson Faculty Service Award, and the University of La Verne Excellence in Teaching Award. Dr. Ghazzawi received numerous other awards and recognitions in 2018, including a U.S. House of Representatives Certificate of Special Congressional Recognition for Excellence in Environmental Leadership, a California State Assembly Excellence in Community Leadership Award, the Inland Valley News Excellence in Community Leadership Award, the Jack Kahl Entrepreneurial Leadership Award, the Pomona Board of Education Service Award, and a City of Pomona Certificate of Recognition. He is the past president of the Western Casewriters Association. He can be reached at [ighazzawi@laverne.edu](mailto:ighazzawi@laverne.edu).



## **PRACTICE**

### **Teacher Leadership in English Language Learning: A Paradigm for Educational Influence in a Field with Unique Needs\***

**Dan Shepherd**  
**Missouri Western State University**

**Sanghee Yeon**  
**Defense Language Institute**

Effective English language learner (ELL) teacher leadership, while especially needed in a demographically changing United States, is challenging. There are numerous research-based approaches to guide and to assist the ELL teacher leader. First, an effective teacher leader in ELL programs must have and share a clear vision for student language development and improvement. The teacher leader should connect students and others to this vision by focusing almost exclusively on their strengths to foster language growth. In order to identify these strengths, some understanding of the unique learning needs of ELLs is required. Second, the best ELL teacher leaders form strong personal relationships with their students. These educationally beneficial relationships are built on openness and communication and on empathy and warmth. Third, ELL teacher leaders can create program achievement and improvement when trust is experienced in a meaningful way between them and their students. This trust, of course, is the result of unquestioned integrity, but it is also developed when trust is evident in the way teacher leaders share authority and freedom of choice with their ELLs.

**Key words:** ELL students, English language learning, leadership development, teacher leadership

Most teachers perceive that they are leaders in their own classrooms; however, just having the title of teacher or standing in front of students and giving instructions does not automatically make one a successful instructional leader. As most students know, some teachers are not necessarily great classroom leaders. Teacher leadership involves so much more than managing students, and with the English language learner (ELL), the need for effective teacher leadership is increased because teachers outside the ELL program need to be influenced to accept greater responsibility for their ELLs.

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\*Shepherd, D., & Yeon, S. (2019). Teacher leadership in English language learning: A paradigm for educational influence in a field with unique needs. *International Leadership Journal*, 11(1), 120–130.

What then is teacher leadership, especially as it relates to a specialized educational program like ELL? What does it take for a teacher to become an effective and influential leader within his or her classroom and school? This practice piece focuses on the most important traits to help an individual become a genuine teacher leader in ELL education.

### **ELL Teacher Leadership Requires a Powerful and Positive Vision**

All successful leaders in history have had a strong sense of vision—a powerful, driving concept of where they wanted to take their organization or group. *Vision*, in a leadership sense, includes primarily three fundamental elements: (a) having a specific and detailed plan to move your organization forward, (b) providing resources to followers to accomplish the stated and shared plan, and (c) connecting people collaboratively to execute the plan.

Experienced leaders have found that individuals in organizations without vision become disconnected from one another, and their work becomes fragmentary and isolated. In the classroom, when ELL students experience this lack of shared vision, they may complete individual tasks but do not have ownership over their own learning, and all too quickly, the objectives and content from these lessons fade quickly from the language learner's memory. Conversely, in classrooms where a vision is promoted but not meaningfully acted upon, ELL students will often do little work, thinking that the teacher leader cannot be trusted to guide their learning since the teacher does not actually practice what is presented as a significant priority. An empty vision, leaders have found, is highly demotivational for followers.

Truly visionary classroom leaders, however, empower ELL students to overcome learning difficulties caused by language differences. Halevy, Berson, and Galinsky (2011) argue that visionary leaders have a greater impact on individuals than the obstacles the individual might be facing. Vision, in other words, is greater than any barriers preventing that vision's implementation. With their vision and action, visionary teacher leaders, as opposed to mere classroom managers, enable followers to associate more with the implemented vision than

with their own demographic identity (Halevy et al., 2011). This finding has tremendous impact for ELL instruction and programming.

These truly visionary teacher leaders also possess certain characteristics. First, they are future oriented. Visionary ELL teacher leaders never remind followers of past mistakes; they always look ahead and move forward. When visionary teacher leaders identify a student's mistake in class today, they do not linger on that negative event. They reflect on it, but instead of dwelling, they seek solutions to avoid the mistake's repetition. Second, effective ELL teacher leaders are action oriented. Everything that they do is intentionally connected to the vision, and they do not allow themselves to be distracted by immediately pressing events. These teachers are disciplined classroom leaders who stay focused on what truly matters and take action accordingly, recognizing what is happening in the learning environment and making appropriate decisions effectively and efficiently. Third, visionary ELL teacher leaders are never content to be the sole person responsible for the vision; they are constantly connecting others to the shared vision. They understand that the organization (or the classroom) does not function exclusively through their own individual efforts. To connect students to the classroom vision, teacher leaders know students' strengths and emphasize those, realizing that success flows from ability, not inability. Grouping students based on their strengths in collaborative tasks is one example of connecting students. Finally, visionary ELL teacher leaders take risks. Vision usually demands change, and change often requires risk as students move beyond their comfort zone. For example, good teacher leaders experiment instructionally, trying different approaches, emphasizing what works, and improving what does not. In order to be innovative, these classroom leaders keep abreast of new methods and new technology (Rouche, Baker, & Rose, 1989).

Currently, the concept of vision is frequently emphasized in educational literature exploring teacher leadership and ELL programming. Russell and Von Esch (2018) describe *vision* as a comprehensive planning process that captures a verifiable commitment to high-quality instruction and effective collaboration between educators and the ELL population. To empower a successful vision that

benefits ELLs, they strongly emphasize the importance of a teacher leader's genuine partnerships with ELLs, principals, content-area teachers, literacy team members, and other school staff (Russell & Von Esch, 2018). This vision is frequently referred to in teacher leadership studies as "big goals"; these big goals for teacher leadership are described as practical, ambitious, and data-informed, requiring conscientious effort by learners for full mastery of content and measurement through authentic assessment (Farr, 2010).

### **ELL Leadership Requires Strong and Beneficial Relationships**

*"If you would win a man to your cause, first convince him that you are his sincere friend. Therein is a drop of honey which catches his heart, which, say what he will, is the great highroad to reason."*

—Abraham Lincoln (1842)

Leadership and relationship are practically synonyms. Adherents of the leader–member exchange theory, a currently dominant leadership paradigm, state unequivocally that followers perform better for caring and sincere leaders (Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, Broer, & Ferris, 2012). Simply put, leaders must have a strong relationship with their followers; consequently, teacher leaders must have strong relationships with their students. What does this mean for the teacher, though? Do teacher leaders "hang out" with their students, or is a leader's relationship somehow different in classroom?

This issue—the ability to develop and to maintain strong relationships among stakeholders—cannot be overemphasized for the teacher leader. Among the teacher leadership competencies developed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards and the National Education Association, the ideas of collaboration, coaching, mentoring, and working within a community form fully instructional leadership, one of the three main leadership pathways of a successful teacher leader (Center for Teaching Quality, 2014). Other skills listed within the remaining pathways, such as advocacy, communication, and organizing, are highly dependent on relationship-building abilities as well (Center for Teaching Quality, 2014). While all students benefit from good relationships with their teacher, the unique academic needs of ELLs mandate a relational

approach. Often, teachers wrongly assume that the learning needs of their second-language students are not dramatically different from those of native language speakers in a classroom (Harper & de Jong, 2011). There are, as expected, countless possible lists of ELL needs; however, several core academic essentials for ELLs are repeated in much of the extant literature. Among these is a sense of belonging to counteract the “otherness” created by their language difference. For the teacher leader to address this need meaningfully, several relational actions must occur. For example, ELL-specific curricula should be created for the students, and progress reports within the focused program of study should be individualized (Rance-Roney, 2009).

Multiple researchers have found that what matters most to students is not the content they learn but the respectfulness, enthusiasm, and encouragement they encounter while learning (Delaney, Johnson, Johnson, & Treslan, 2010). The most important quality of being a successful teacher leader is the ability to relate with people. Master, Loeb, Whitney, and Wyckoff (2012) specifically studied the relationship between English as a second language (ESL) teachers’ characteristics and their instructional successes and found that teachers’ motivation to teach in a school with more ELL students had the strongest correlation with their ultimate success as teachers with that population. In other words, their desire to work with ELL students was more vital to their success than their knowledge in the target language. In addition, Cornelius-White (2007) synthesized more than 1,000 studies from 1948 to 2004 on student–teacher relationships and found that the factors that contributed the most to positive student–teacher relationships were the teachers’ empathy and warmth toward students. These relational attributes are consistent with a humanistic education philosophy (Rogers, 1961).

Great leaders usually help followers find success in an organization by connecting the followers to the essential work to be done via their strengths, not their weaknesses (Rath & Conchie, 2008). Unlike mere managers, who usually look for the weaknesses of their subordinates and focus their energy and time on eliminating those weaknesses, successful leaders intentionally place the right

people in the right environment. The ELL teacher leader, therefore, does not focus on what a student lacks but on what she or he possesses in academic and other abilities that will foster academic achievement. To identify these necessary strengths, successful teachers develop close relationships with their students.

Finally, the successful ELL teacher leader emphasizes three-way communication: teacher to student, student to teacher, and teacher to external stakeholders. In the classroom, the most obvious communication with students is through oral or written feedback. Research has recently confirmed the importance of teacher leader responsiveness and availability. These priorities will become even more pronounced as the demand for distance learning and flipped/blended classrooms increases because of improving technology (Delaney et al, 2010). Teaching is no longer confined exclusively to the classroom. English language learning, especially, can and does occur at all hours of the day. With the assistance of beneficial Internet resources, even distance is no longer a significant hurdle to ELL improvement. Clearly, the best ELL teacher leaders are those who provide great responsiveness and availability in their work with students. In addition, teacher leaders need to relay student concerns and needs to program administrators. Since ELLs do not usually go to a program administrator to talk about their concerns, unless they are very urgent, their teacher is the one who can advocate for them.

ELL teacher leaders similarly emphasize strong relationships through obvious investment in the creation of welcoming environments (Farr, 2010). These welcoming learning environments benefit ELLs, of course, but in order for that to be fully realized, they also meaningfully involve the community through respect for local culture. These environments are strengthened through a good connection with the principal and other ELL-related educators who work in literacy development or content instruction (Russell & Von Esch, 2018).

### **ELL Leadership Requires Consistent and Unquestioned Integrity**

Numerous researchers have emphasized the need for trust between leaders and their followers (e.g., Korsgaard, Brower, & Lester, 2015), but why is trust even

more important in teaching? As the primary leader in a classroom, a teacher often stands in front of the class, modeling appropriate language and content use. Teachers facilitate the class, give feedback, and test the students. Without trust, leading the students to attain a learning goal is not truly possible. A recent survey showed that to gain trust, teachers should interact with their students as individuals, show consistent caring, and respond to student individual needs. In other words, ELL teacher leaders need to take the initiative to practice care and compassion for students, rather than just saying the right things. They must use their authority compassionately, providing guidance and support within communicated boundaries. Students also seek fairness and integrity from their teachers as a prerequisite to trusting them (Shepherd, 2016).

Clearly, students must trust teachers, but teachers must also trust their students. ELL teacher leaders must trust their students enough to give them the control of the classroom. Rogers (1961) states that “the only kind of learning which significantly affects behavior is self-discovered, self-appropriated learning” (276). No truly transformational learning environment can occur without sharing control of what to learn with students. In this paradigm, teacher leaders are more like guides and mentors, rather than directive instructors (Boyd & Myers, 1988). However, giving control back to ELL students is not easily accomplished since most students are not familiar with autonomy and cannot initially be self-regulated. Effective ELL teacher leaders appropriately scaffold autonomy just as they scaffolded classroom activities for improved language learning. *Scaffolding*, in an educational sense, refers to a teaching method that enables a student to learn more through the gradual release of teacher support or other assistance. This approach requires significant expertise and student understanding. Depending on students’ knowledge level and individual learning styles, teachers should adjust the degree of shared learning responsibility with students as appropriate.

The issue of trust is especially important for ELL teacher leaders. Personal effectiveness as a teacher leader is greatly enhanced when trust is evident between the leader and his or her peers (Center for Teaching Quality, 2014).

This trust among stakeholders is best fostered through expertise, perhaps demonstrated through leading professional development or by modeling strong ELL instruction for peers. The transformative teacher leader brings entire learning communities together through ethical behavior, credibility, resiliency, empathy, humility, and achievement (Russell & Von Esch, 2018).

Finally, teachers can teach how to develop ELL autonomy through self-regulatory processes and strategies. Teacher leaders guide their students to be independent learners by checking their language development progress regularly. Teachers must be willing to negotiate what is to be done in class. Good teacher leaders give students choices and later ask them to evaluate and reflect on their learning choices. By giving students this power of choice and ownership, they become more independent and trustworthy learners (Mezirow, 1991). Wool (1989) argues that by establishing a strong learning alliance between teacher and students, students can manage their feelings and integrate skills to make sense of the learning experience. A powerful way to ensure the autonomy of students is to write a learning contract. Teachers and students both design, develop, and sign a contract to ensure contribution to learning from both parties. This is also a good way to ensure the accountability from students when a classroom is flipped (Carstens & Sheehan, 2014).

## **Conclusion**

Teaching, under the best of circumstances, is a rewarding but very challenging role. To seek greater influence through leadership within the field of teaching is especially commendable. When coupled with the greater inherent challenges of ELL programming, effective ELL teacher leadership is especially needed in a diversifying United States. Certainly, the task is difficult, but there are numerous research-based approaches to guide and to assist the ELL teacher leader. First, an effective teacher leader in ELL programs must have and share a clear vision for student language development and improvement. Then, the teacher leader must connect students and others to this vision by focusing almost exclusively on their strengths to foster language growth. Second, the best ELL teacher leaders



form strong personal relationships with their followers. These educationally beneficial relationships are built on openness and communication and on empathy and warmth. Third, ELL teacher leaders can create program achievement and improvement when trust is experienced in a meaningful way between them and their students. This trust, of course, is the result of unquestioned integrity, but it is also developed when trust is evident in the way teacher leaders share authority and freedom of choice with their ELLs. Certainly, all teachers have the potential to become leaders and to have greater influence in their programs. By being mindful about these research-supported characteristics, ELL teachers can grow as classroom and programmatic leaders.

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Dan Shepherd, EdD, is the chair of the Department of Teacher Education within the College of Professional Studies at Missouri Western State University. The teacher preparation programs within this department currently serve approximately 500 graduate and undergraduate students. Prior to joining the university faculty, Dr. Shepherd served for 10 years as a public high school English teacher and another 10 years as a public school administrator, both at the building and district levels. He can be reached at [dshepherd@missouriwestern.edu](mailto:dshepherd@missouriwestern.edu).

Sanghee Yeon, PhD, is an instructor for the Defense Language Institute. She currently works within the Korean language and cultures program in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Her primary research interests include second-language acquisition, second language phonology, and language learning strategies. Recently, she has pursued studies in the area of brain-based learning for language students. Dr. Yeon has been a language teacher and academic specialist for more than 10 years. She can be reached at [sanghee.yeon@dliflc.edu](mailto:sanghee.yeon@dliflc.edu).