THESIS

THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERS' IMPLICIT FOLLOWERSHIP THEORIES ON EMPLOYEE OUTCOMES

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

THE INFLUENCE OF LEADERS' IMPLICIT FOLLOWERSHIP THEORIES ON EMPLOYEE OUTCOMES

This paper addressed a new concept called leader's implicit followership theories (LIFTs), which can be defined as leaders' pre-existing beliefs about followers' personal attributes and characteristics (Sy, 2010). The goal of this paper was to address the impact of LIFTs on employee outcomes. Specifically, LIFTs were hypothesized to influence the relationship between supervisors and their employees. Employees' perception of this relationship was hypothesized to influence employee outcomes – namely, employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment. This model was partially supported. Supervisor LIFTs did not predict employees' perceptions of the relationship with their supervisor. Employees' perceptions of the relationship predicted job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Conceptual and measurement limitations of LIFTs and future directions for research on LIFTs are discussed.

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LEADERS' IMPLICIT FOLLOWERSHIP THEORIES: AN INTRODUCTION

Leadership is arguably one of the most heavily researched areas in psychology and business. This paper addresses a fairly new concept that could change the way that researchers and practitioners think about leadership. This concept is called leader's implicit followership theories (LIFTs), and can be defined as leaders' pre-existing beliefs about followers' personal attributes and characteristics (Sy, 2010). LIFTs are conceptually parallel to implicit leadership theories (ILTs; Kenney, Schwartz-Kenney, & Blascovich, 1996) and can be viewed as an extension of McGregor's Theory X and Y (McGregor, 2006). LIFTs are similar to, but conceptually distinct from implicit person theory (Dweck & Leggett, 1988) and implicit performance theory (Engle & Lord, 1997). The goal of this paper is to address the impact of LIFTs on employee outcomes. Specifically, LIFTs should affect leaders' behaviors towards their followers, which should then affect the quality of the relationship between leaders and their followers. The quality of this relationship should affect employee outcomes. The employee outcomes that I will examine are employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment. The relationship between leaders and their followers (LMX; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) is expected to mediate the relationship between leaders' implicit followership theories and employee outcomes.

In the following sections, I will review implicit leadership theories in considerable detail, as LIFTs are conceptually similar to implicit leadership theories in several aspects.

Next, I will introduce the construct of LIFTs, and the conceptual distinctions between LIFTs and other related theories (e.g., McGregor's Theory X and Y). I will then cover how LIFTs are measured. This review will lead to the hypotheses and models that are proposed in the current study.

Implicit Leadership Theories

Implicit leadership theories (ILTs), also referred to as "leadership categorization theories," have been defined as individuals' pre-existing assumptions and prototypes about the behaviors, traits and abilities that their prototypical leader possesses (Kenney, Schwartz-Kenney, & Blascovich, 1996). Lord and Maher (1993) defined leadership as being perceived as a leader by others, and suggested that if a person is not perceived and accepted as a leader by others, that person will not be as influential or as effective as a person who is perceived and accepted as a leader by others. In other words, a leader must match a follower's leadership prototype in order to be perceived as a leader. I will briefly describe the cognitive aspect of categorization before discussing ILTs because the ILT categorization process is based on the cognitive concepts of schemas and prototypes.

Prototypes in cognitive categorization theory. Simply defined, schemas are the cognitive organization systems that individuals use to encode incoming information. Schemas provide individuals with a pre-existing cognitive structure or framework against which incoming information about stimuli (including objects and people) is compared. One can also think of schemas as filters through which incoming information passes. Individuals' subsequent judgments about the stimuli are then affected by the schema (Tesser, 1978; Fiske & Linville, 1980). For example, an individual's schema about movie theatres might include generic features of movie theatres and previous experiences in

movie theatres. This schema or cognitive framework should influence the individual's expectations and information processing during a visit to a movie theatre – for example, when walking into an unfamiliar movie theatre, people may expect to see a movie concession stand as they enter the theatre based on generic features of theatres and previous experience.

Cognitive prototypes are commonly used forms of schemas that are used during information processing (e.g., Cantor & Mischel, 1979). Prototypes can be defined as sets of the most widely shared or salient features of members in some category (Rosch, 1978). For example, an individual's *schema* for birds could include salient bird features such as "flies", "builds nests in trees", and "feathers", as well as some less obvious features such as "lives in Antarctica" (if exposed to knowledge about penguins) or "stands on one leg" (if exposed to knowledge about flamingoes). The individual's *prototype* for birds might be a robin or a sparrow, which incorporates the most salient features in the schema. A penguin would be a less likely prototype, because penguins do not fly or build nests in trees. Therefore, prototypes provide a handy method of summarizing the most common features or attributes of a category, whether that category concerns objects or people (Phillips & Lord, 1982).

Role of Prototypes in Implicit Leadership Theories. Lord, Foti, and Phillips (1982) proposed that people use the same cognitive categorization process discussed above when processing information about leaders. In other words, people use their existing schema and their existing prototype of leaders to process incoming information about their actual supervisor. According to implicit leadership theory, followers implicitly compare their supervisors and managers to their leadership prototypes to form

perceptions of their supervisors (Lord, Foti, & De Vader, 1984). Once a person is perceived and categorized as a leader, followers may selectively focus on schema-consistent information – even memory retrieval can become biased to focus on schema-consistent information (Phillips & Lord, 1982).

This implies that followers can make inaccurate guesses about their leader's attributes and characteristics. For example, a follower may categorize his supervisor as a leader because the supervisor exhibits schema-consistent characteristics such as intelligence, confidence and good communication skills. When asked whether that leader is also proficient in some area that the follower has no knowledge about (e.g., planning and organizational skills), the follower is likely to say yes because this attribute is likely to be part of the prototype of a leader (Kenney et al., 1996). By contrast, if a follower's supervisor does not match with the most salient features of the follower's leadership prototype (e.g., intelligence and confidence), when asked whether that leader is proficient in some area that the follower has no knowledge about (e.g., planning and organizational skills), the follower is likely to say no because the supervisor has already been categorized as not matching the leader prototype. Followers may also use this matching process to make inferences about other attributes, such as the degree of power and discretion that their leader has at work (Maurer & Lord, 1991).

Causal attributions are one important area that is related to employees' perceptions of their leader. When leaders make mistakes, followers may generally attribute these mistakes to the leader, because leaders are seen as having more power and making influential decisions in general (Schyns & Hansbrough, 2008). However, the attribution of these mistakes should be related to the followers' ILTs. Schyns and

Hansbrough theorized that if a supervisor's characteristics do not match well with his or her followers' ILTs, that the employees are more likely to attribute the supervisor's mistakes to internal characteristics instead of taking environmental characteristics into account. On the other hand, if the supervisor is more "leader-like", then the employees are likely to make external or situational attributions. Followers' perceptions of leader effectiveness have also been found to be related to employees' ILTs. Previous research has found that a match between leaders' actual characteristics and followers' ILTs was positively related to follower ratings of leaders' effectiveness (Nye & Forsyth, 1991).

Implicit leadership profiles. According to implicit leadership theory, then, leadership prototypes can be thought of as profiles of expected leadership characteristics. In other words, followers' leadership prototypes can be described as multidimensional in the sense that one's leadership prototype consists of multiple leadership characteristics or dimensions, not just one dimension (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005). For example, a follower's leadership prototype is likely to consist of a set of dimensions such as "intelligent", "sensitive" and "masculine" as opposed to just one dimension such as "intelligent". Individuals form an impression of their manager based on the match between the individual's implicit leadership profile and the supervisor's actual characteristics. The degree to which discrepancies exist between one's implicit leadership profile and their supervisor's actual characteristics subsequently affects the impression that an individual forms of his or her manager (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005). Specifically, the bigger the discrepancies that exist between one's implicit leadership profile and supervisor's actual characteristics, the more negative the impression that will be formed. When a supervisor's actual characteristics do not match his or her employees' leadership

prototypes, that person may not be perceived as "leader-like" by employees (MacDonald, Sulsky & Brown, 2008).

Some dimensions are considered *prototypic* – characteristics that most people would view as desirable indicators of leadership. Others are *antiprotoypic* – characteristics that appear undesirable, yet may be strongly associated with the idea of leadership for some people (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005). Researchers have identified six underlying dimensions of ILTs including four prototypic dimensions – Sensitivity, Intelligence, Motivation, and Dynamism, and two antiprototypes – Tyranny and Masculinity (Offermann, Kennedy & Wirtz, 1994). The term "anti-prototypic" can cause confusion, because it might not be clear to a reader whether it indicates traits that are characteristic of negative leadership or traits that are not characteristic of leadership. This distinction is not emphasized in the literature, and can mislead readers' conceptual understanding of implicit leadership profiles. There is a conceptual difference, for example, between viewing tyranny as a trait that is generally *uncharacteristic* of a leader, and viewing tyranny as a trait that is generally *undesirable* in a leader. People may not follow those who exhibit behaviors that are uncharacteristic of a leader because they may not consider such people to be leaders. However, people can follow "bad" leaders (e.g., destructive leaders; Einarsen, Aasland & Skogstad, 2007) because these undesirable characteristics may be a part of one's conceptualization of an effective leader. Further, these characteristics can be perceived as being effective in some situations in the work context. For example, several jobs in the military sector require leaders to have characteristics that would normally be considered socially undesirable. A drill sergeant who displays aggressive behaviors is likely to be seen as more effective than a drill

sergeant who displays passive behaviors. One study involving cadets from West Point University found that "dark side" traits such as being critical of others and narcissism had a positive effect on various leadership development outcomes (Harms, Spain & Hannah, in press). Therefore, the term "anti-prototypical" refers to traits that are seen as socially undesirable or negatively characteristic of a leader, as opposed to traits that are uncharacteristic of a leader. For the sake of clarity, I will use the terms "positive" and "negative" from here on instead of "prototypical" and "anti-prototypical", respectively. The purpose of using the terms positive and negative is to reflect the idea that both kinds of prototypes reflect followers' characteristics regardless of whether they are desirable or undesirable characteristics.

Overall and matching effects of ILTs. ILT suggests that leaders' characteristics affect followers' outcomes through two different routes: overall effects and matching effects (Epitropaki and Martin, 2005). Direct links between a leader's actual characteristics and employee level outcomes (e.g., the relationship between leader sensitivity and employee job satisfaction) can be considered overall effects. Leaders with more positive characteristics are expected to have more positive employee outcomes, regardless of employees' implicit leadership profiles. This is, of course, consistent with numerous other leadership theories (e.g., path-goal theory; House, 1996; transformational leadership; Conger & Kanungo, 1998); the real contribution of ILTs is in the idea of matching effects. Matching effects are the effects of *discrepancies* between an employee's ILT profile and his or her manager's actual leadership characteristics. ILT predicts that these discrepancies are also important predictors of employee outcomes, with greater discrepancies resulting in more negative outcomes.

Epitropaki and Martin (2005) illustrated these different kinds of effects in a longitudinal study. They found overall effects for prototypic (positive) dimensions such as "Sensitive", "Dynamic" and "Intelligent," which significantly predicted leader-follower relationship quality. Surprisingly, anti-prototypic (negative) dimensions such as "Tyranny" and "Masculinity" did not significantly predict relationship quality. In other words, whether a leader was high or low in dimensions such as Tyranny and Masculinity did not influence the relationship between a leader and his or her followers. Epitropaki and Martin also found evidence for matching effects for both positive and negative leadership characteristics: the higher the degree of the match between the employees' ILTs and the managers' actual behaviors, the better the reported quality of the relationship between the employee and the manager. The trend of these results suggests that the positive dimensions have significant overall effects and matching effects, while the negative dimensions have significant matching effects but not significant overall effects. In other words, leaders with positive characteristics had positive effects on leader-follower relations, but whether leaders' negative characteristics impacted their employees depended on whether or not those negative characteristics were part of the employees' implicit leadership profiles. Further, Epitropaki and Martin found that both overall and matching effects were related to numerous employee outcomes, including well-being, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment.

Leaders' implicit followership theories (LIFTs) are based on the same underlying principles upon which implicit leadership theories are based. For example, LIFTs are based on cognitive prototypes, and the match between one person's prototype and another person's actual characteristics. This is explained in detail in the next section.

Leaders' Implicit Followership Theories

Sy (2010) argued that leaders categorize and have cognitive prototypes of followers in the same manner that followers have cognitive prototypes of leaders, and that these follower prototypes can have important influences on follower and organizational outcomes. He refers to these prototypes as leaders' implicit followership theories (LIFTs; Sy, 2010). LIFTs can be defined as a leader's beliefs about followers' personal attributes and characteristics. Sy has developed the LIFT construct, and written and validated a measure of LIFTs using theory and pilot testing. LIFTs are theoretically multidimensional in nature, just like ILTs. An underlying assumption of implicit followership theories is that they influence the manner in which leaders interact with followers, the consequent relationship between leaders and followers, and subsequent follower outcomes. This assumption is drawn from the implicit leadership theory literature, which suggests that discrepancies between ILTs and supervisor's actual characteristics influence the impression that employees make of their leaders. The degree of these discrepancies then influences the interaction between leaders and employees, and consequently the relationship between leaders and employees, which in turn influences various employee outcomes (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005). A similar theoretical sequence occurs according to the LIFTs theory – leaders' perceptions of employees' characteristics should influence the interaction between the leader and employee, which then influences the relationship between the leader and employee, and finally influence various employee outcomes.

Just as in ILT, LIFTs are expected to influence employee outcomes in two ways. First, there should be an overall or general effect of a leader's LIFTS across all followers.

Leaders who hold more positive LIFTs should, on average, have followers with better outcomes. This is consistent with the general predictions of Theory X and Theory Y (McGregor, 1960). For example, a supervisor who believes that followers are generally industrious, enthusiastic and reliable should have a better relationship with *all of* his or her followers than a supervisor who believes that followers are generally incompetent, arrogant, or rude. There should be differences in behavior between these two supervisors, and these differences are likely to influence the relationships between these supervisors and their employees. Second, there should also be a matching effect between a supervisor and each individual follower where the degree of the match between a supervisor's LIFTs and the follower's actual characteristics will influence leader-employee relationships and employee outcomes. For example, a leader who believes that her followers are generally enthusiastic, industrious, and reliable should have a better relationship with followers who display these characteristics, and a poorer relationship with followers who do not (e.g., being unenthusiastic and/or unreliable).

Recent research on LIFTs has found support for the overall effects of LIFTs on employee outcomes. Thus far, existing research has focused on overall effects, rather than on the effects of matching between a supervisor's LIFTs and an employee's actual characteristics. A conceptual reason for measuring LIFTs at a general level in these studies is that the LIFTs scale and concept are new, and investigating LIFTs at a general level can provide important preliminary information about the scale and the concept. At this stage, it would be helpful to understand how LIFTs work at the general level before getting at the more specific and complex matching relationships between leaders and specific followers. If little or no support is found for the general influence of a

supervisor's LIFTs on followers, this may suggest that there is more work to be done on the LIFTs construct or scale before moving on to more specific matching hypotheses.

Current LIFTs literature. The existing literature on LIFTs has found significant results for the positive LIFTs dimensions on employee outcomes (e.g., Kruse, 2010; Johnson & Kedharnath, 2010), but results for the negative LIFTs dimensions appear to be mixed at best. There is a positive correlation between leaders who have more positive LIFTs and leaders' and followers' wellbeing, as well as a positive correlation between positive LIFTs and leaders' and followers' liking for each other (Kruse, 2010). Leaders' positive LIFTs predict variance beyond leaders' positive affect in followers' attribution of their leaders' level of charisma, and positive LIFTs also predict variance beyond leaders' positive affect in followers' performance (Johnson & Kedharnath, 2010).

The role of mediators between LIFTs and follower outcomes has also been considered. For example, the Pygmalion effect (Eden, 1992) has been examined as a mediator in the relationship between leaders' LIFTs and follower outcomes (Tram, 2010; Whiteley; 2010). Tram's results on work groups suggest that leaders' positive LIFTs may influence a group's expenditure of effort through their impact on group efficacy and performance. Whiteley's results on leader-follower dyads suggest that positive LIFTs increase followers' expectations of performance, which leads to a better quality of relationship between leaders and followers, and results in a higher level of follower performance. Another study showed that LIFTs acted as a moderator between personality and employee level outcomes such as job satisfaction, performance, and citizenship behaviors (Kim-Jo & Choi, 2010). For example, the Industry subscale in the LIFTs scale moderated the effect between agreeableness and job performance – when the leader's

Industry score was higher, leader and employee agreeableness was related more strongly to job performance than other LIFTs scales. The LIFTs subscales will be presented in more detail later.

I have presented the existing research on LIFTs above. Next, I will describe the similarities and differences between LIFTs and other theories that are conceptually related or sound similar to LIFTs. An important purpose of comparing and contrasting LIFTs with other theories is to understand the unique information that LIFTs can provide about leadership.

LIFTs and Theories X and Y. Although the LIFTs theory (Sy, 2010) derives primarily from Implicit Leadership Theory, it clearly follows the logic of the classic management paradigm of Theory X and Theory Y (McGregor, 1960). Leaders' prototypes and perceptions of followers have previously been addressed in the form of Theory X and Theory Y (McGregor, 2006). McGregor stated that supervisors who hold a Theory X point of view assumed that employees are inherently lazy, dislike work, need close and constant supervision because they are not capable of self-direction or self-control, and do not participate in organizational problem solving. Supervisors who hold a "Theory Y" view, on the other hand, have a much more positive view of employees – they believe that employees inherently think of work as a natural part of their lives, are capable of self-control and responsibility, and will attempt to solve organizational problems if given the opportunity. In McGregor's view, as in LIFTs theory, these beliefs that supervisors hold about their employees influence the supervisor's behavior to the employees and, therefore, the employees' responses to the supervisor. When looking at the overall effects of supervisors' LIFTs on employee outcomes, it is conceptually similar

to looking at the effects of supervisors' Theory X or Theory Y on employee outcomes. For example, having an overall tendency to have positive LIFTs about followers is conceptually similar to having a Theory Y view of followers.

Limited empirical research has been conducted on Theory X and Y, therefore a limited amount of research has found support for McGregor's theories. For example, Finman (1973) found that employees who perceived that their supervisor held a Theory Y perspective tended to have higher job satisfaction. Results from a different study showed that managers who held Theory X views of employees tended to prefer more antisocial methods of gaining compliance such as deceit and threats, while managers who held Theory Y views of employees tended to prefer prosocial methods of gaining compliance such as esteem and ingratiation (Neuliep, 1987). Neuliep (1996) investigated the effects of holding a Theory X or Y view on the perception of organizational ethics, and found that Theory X and Y managers did not have different perceptions of hypothetical unethical behaviors but held different perceptions of the *effectiveness* of the hypothetical unethical behaviors.

A recent review of Theory X and Y by Kopelman, Prottas and Davis (2008) discussed the lack of and need for research on managerial assumptions of employees because there are only a few direct tests of Theory X and Y. According to the authors, McGregor identified management practices that should be congruent with Theory X and Y, but these practices do not effectively get at the idea that managers' assumptions and attitudes will treat employees in a way that reflects these assumptions and attitudes. The authors use the example of a manager who believes that people are inherently trustworthy and desire opportunities for personal growth – this manager's beliefs are more likely to

result in facilitating personal growth for employees in the work environment. Employees should feel fulfilled in such an environment. The authors contrast this manager with a manager who believes that people are inherently lazy, untrustworthy, and need constant supervision – this manager's beliefs will likely result in the manager treating his or her employees in such a way that reflects these beliefs. This could result in employees having low motivation.

Though LIFTs and McGregor's Theory X and Y are conceptually similar, an important distinction lies between the constructs. While both LIFTs and Theory X and Y attempt to explain that leaders' assumptions about followers' attributes influence follower and organizational-level outcomes, the theory of LIFTs extends this contention by adding a distinct aspect to theorizing about leaders' assumptions about followers. LIFTs incorporate the categorization process and prototype matching aspects that have been proposed by the implicit leadership theory literature (e.g., Lord, Foti, & De Vader, 1984; Lord & Maher, 1993). As previously mentioned,LIFTs theory supports the idea that supervisors' perceptions of followers are multidimensional in nature. An advantage of using the LIFTs theory is that it allows us to explore the overall effects of LIFTs on follower outcomes (which extends McGregor's Theory X Theory Y distinction). Using the LIFTs framework also allows us to explore the more complex matching process that works very similarly to the matching process in the ILTs literature.

Distinction between LIFTs and implicit performance theories. Implicit performance theories (Engle & Lord, 1997) have been described as pre-existing prototypes that supervisors rely on to form impressions of the effectiveness of their employees. The process involved in forming these impressions about subordinates

includes the same prototype-matching process described in the implicit leadership theory literature – leaders use their existing prototypes of effective employees to compare their actual employees to this prototype. Engle and Lord proposed that employees who behave consistently with a supervisor's implicit performance theories should be evaluated more favorably by their supervisor compared to employees who do not behave consistently with their supervisor's implicit performance theories. The authors found that congruence between a supervisor's implicit performance theories and his or her employee's actual characteristics predicted the supervisor's liking of the employee and relationship quality. While implicit performance theories and LIFTs may be related, implicit performance theories are conceptually distinct from leaders' implicit followership theories in that implicit performance theories focus on leaders' expectations for their followers' *performance* whereas LIFTs focus on leaders' beliefs about followers' *personal attributes*. LIFTs encompass several personal attributes about followers including both positive and negative follower traits beyond job performance, while implicit performance theories focus only on the followers' effectiveness.

Distinction between LIFTs and implicit person theories. According to the implicit person theory, there are two views that people take – those who take the entity perspective believe that people's personal attributes are fixed, while those who take the incremental perspective believe that people's personal attributes are malleable (Dweck & Leggett, 1988). Researchers have argued that implicit person theories can influence judgments of others – in other words, one's incremental or entity views of personal attributes (e.g., skills, personality, and intelligence) can influence a person's judgments of others (Chiu, Hong & Dweck, 1997). Implicit person theories (IPTs) can be applied to the

self – for example, one may believe that he or she can or cannot improve on critical thinking skills, and they can be applied to others as well – for example, one may believe that others can or cannot improve on their critical thinking skills.

While IPTs are theoretically applicable in several contexts, I will focus on research that has been done in the work context. For example, IPTs have been shown to influence the relationship between managers' implicit person theories and their subsequent coaching behaviors (Heslin, Vandewalle & Latham, 2006). Although implicit person theories and LIFTs may be related because they both concern leaders' views and assumptions of followers, they are theoretically distinct concepts. Namely LIFTs focus on leaders' assumptions about followers' personal attributes, whereas IPTs in the leadership context focuses on leaders' beliefs about the degree to which personal attributes are fixed or malleable.

Measurement of LIFTs. Sy (2010) developed a new scale to measure LIFTs. He first conducted a pilot study to capture 192 students' perceptions of a "follower", an "effective" follower, an "ineffective" follower, and "subordinates," then conducted a frequency analysis and identified the most common themes in participants' responses. Sy then surveyed 149 workplace supervisors and managers regarding the themes observed in the pilot study. He sought to organize follower prototypes into several distinct dimensions in the same manner that people categorize incoming information about leaders into multiple dimensions such as *Intelligent* and *Sensitive* (e.g., Offermann, Kennedy & Wirtz, 1994). Sy categorized follower prototypes into dimensions via exploratory factor analysis and found that a six category model had the strongest internal consistency and accounted for a considerable amount of total variance explained. He

retained the top three items from each category for parsimony and therefore identified an 18 item, 6 factor scale. The six factors or dimensions are *Industry, Enthusiasm, Good Citizen, Conformity, Insubordination, and Incompetence*. Industry, Enthusiasm and Good Citizen can be classified as follower prototypes or positive LIFTs, while Conformity, Insubordination, and Incompetence can be classified as follower anti-prototypes or negative LIFTs.

Sy (2010) performed confirmatory factor analyses and found that a second-order two-factor LIFT model in which the dimensions loaded onto two higher order factors fit significantly better than a null model or a single factor model ($X^2_{128} = 348.89$, $p < .01$; CFI = .95, TLI = .93, RMSEA = .07). Specifically, the Industry, Enthusiasm and Good Citizen factors loaded onto a prototypical or positive second order LIFTs factor, and Conformity, Insubordination, and Incompetence loaded onto an anti-prototypical or negative second order LIFTs factor. He also found that a first-order six-factor model, in which each subscale represents a distinct factor of LIFTs, fit marginally better than the second-order two-factor model ($X^2_{120} = 271.75$, $p < .01$; CFI = .96, TLI = .95, RMSEA = .06). Support for the six-factor model suggests that instead of the positive and negative LIFTs distinction that is supported in the two-factor model, each of the six dimensions are discrete and each get at a different piece of the latent LIFTs construct. Sy's confirmatory factor analysis results show that both the first-order six-factor and second-order two-factor models are plausible models since the fit indices for the both models were acceptable.

Current Study

The current study is an analysis of data that were originally collected as part of a large-scale study on the correlates of LIFTs (Sy, Johnson, Kedharnath, Kim, Tram, Whiteley & Choi, 2009). This study builds on and extends the original study by proposing a mediated model to account for the effects of LIFTs on employee outcomes. As mentioned before, both LIFTs and Theory X and Y frameworks get at the idea that leaders' beliefs about followers affect employee outcomes. Epitropaki and Martin (2005) argued that the relationship between leaders and followers is the mediator between employee perceptions of leaders' and employee outcomes. My study parallels theirs, but examines leaders' LIFTs instead of followers' ILTs. Specifically, I propose that employees' perceived LMX will mediate the overall effects of supervisors' LIFTs on employee job satisfaction and employee organizational commitment. These variables will be briefly described here, and explained in more detail below along with formal hypotheses.

As described before, LIFTs are defined as leaders' assumptions and beliefs about followers' personal attributes (Sy, 2010). The leader-member exchange theory (LMX; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) concerns the quality of the relationship between a supervisor and his or her follower. Though LMX has been measured both from the supervisor and employee perspective in previous research, only the LMX from the employee perspective will be considered in this study, as the employees' perception of LMX should be more directly related to employee outcomes than the supervisors' perception of LMX.

Weiss, Nicholas and Daus (1999) described job satisfaction as employees' positive attitudes or affective reactions towards their job, and defined organizational

commitment as employees' feelings of commitment and attachment to their organization. Job satisfaction and organizational commitment are job attitudes that have been heavily studied in the field because of their influence on other important outcomes such as job performance (e.g., Ostroff, 1992; Meyer & Allen, 1997).

I propose that leaders' LIFTs will influence the quality of the relationship between a supervisor and his or her employees (LMX). The quality of the relationship between a supervisor and his or her employees should then influence employee job satisfaction and organizational commitment. As previously mentioned, the current study will study the across-followers, overall effect of LIFTs. If the preliminary hypotheses presented in this study are supported, I intend to examine the match between supervisors' LIFTs and actual follower characteristics in a later study.

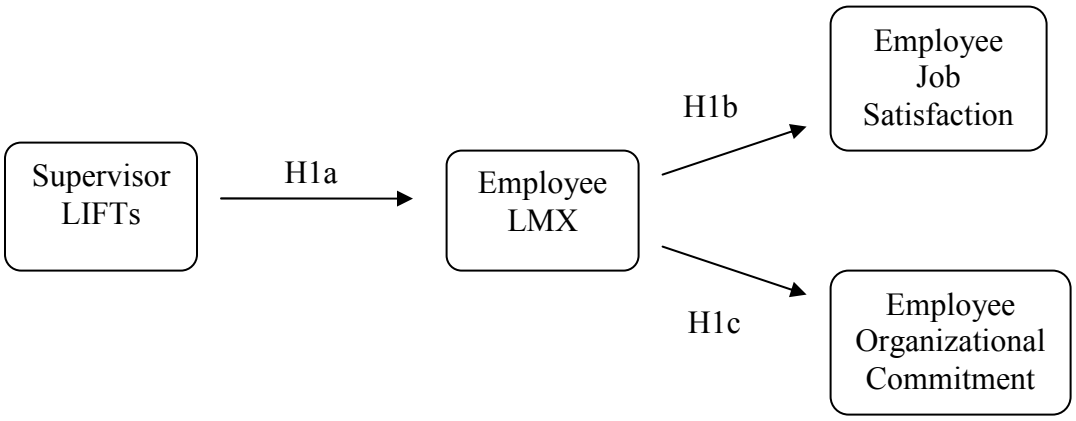

Figure 1. Proposed model of the effect of supervisors' LIFTs on employee outcomes

Leader-member exchange. The leader-member exchange theory (LMX; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Bauer & Green, 1996; Liden, Sparrow & Wayne, 1997) posits that within a work group, the relationship between a leader and his or her subordinates can

vary in quality. That is, supervisors and managers develop close relationships with only a few subordinates – these subordinates are considered to be "in-group members", and are thought to have more autonomy, responsibility, and opportunity for learning and personal growth. In these high-quality leader-member exchanges, supervisors go beyond what is specified in formal job descriptions. In contrast, low quality LMX involves less high-quality interactions between the leader and subordinates, and the relationship between the supervisor and these subordinates or "out-group members" is generally defined by the organization's job description and contract. The quality of relationship between a supervisor and his or her employee has been shown to influence of various outcomes. Research shows that a difference exists between subordinates who have high-quality LMX in comparison to those with low-quality LMX. For example, Lee (2001) found that subordinates in low-quality LMX relationships feel jealousy towards those with high-quality LMX relationships. Vecchio (1995) found that employees with low-quality LMX desired a high-quality LMX with their supervisor and perceived the differential treatment towards others as unfair. Overall, the LMX literature has shown support for the theory in that that the quality of the relationship between a supervisor and his or her subordinates has been shown to predict organizational outcomes (e.g., Boies & Howell, 2006; Erdogan & Enders, 2007; Moss, Sanchez, Brumbaugh & Borkowski, 2009; Van Dyne, Kamdar & Joireman, 2008).

The causal order of the variables in this study is based on research findings that attitudes lead to behaviors. For example, Azjen's (1985) theory of planned behavior states that one's attitudes towards a behavior predict one's intentions to perform that behavior, which then leads to the behavior. This theory has been supported in the

literature (e.g., Martin et al., 2010). Based on the premise that attitudes predict behaviors, the relationship between a leader's implicit followership theories and LMX should be explained by the theoretical premise that a leader's general perception of followers should influence his or her subsequent behaviors and the quality of the relationship between that leader and his or her employees. Specifically, when a leader's implicit followership theory is generally prototypical (or positive) and is reflected in the leader's actions, the quality of the relationship or LMX between that leader and his or her subordinates should be of higher-quality when compared to a leader whose LIFTs are generally anti-prototypical (or negative).

> *Hypothesis 1a*: Supervisors' LIFTs will have a direct positive effect on average employee LMX – the more positive the supervisor's LIFTs, the higher the quality of the employee LMX.

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is associated with many outcomes for both organizations and individual employees. It is positively correlated with job involvement and positive mood (e.g., Spector, 1997), and is negatively correlated with negative attitudes such as frustration and tension (e.g., Spector & Jex, 1998). Job satisfaction has been shown to play a marginal role in employee absenteeism; for example, Hausknecht, Hiller and Vance (2008) conducted a longitudinal study over six years and found that an interaction between job satisfaction and commitment at the work group level predicted absenteeism. Carsten and Spector (1987) conducted a meta-analysis on the effects of job satisfaction on employee turnover, and found a negative correlation of -.24. The relationship between job satisfaction and job performance has been studied extensively,

and these variables have been shown to have an average correlation of .30 across 312 samples (Judge, Thoresen, Bono & Patton, 2001).

Research has consistently shown that LMX significantly predicts employee job satisfaction. For example, Major, Kozlowski, Chao, and Gardner (1995) conducted a longitudinal study on 248 employees and found that LMX significantly predicted job satisfaction. I propose that LIFTs will have an indirect effect on job satisfaction. Specifically, more positive LIFTs will have a positive relationship with employee job satisfaction where employee LMX is a mediator. Epitropaki and Martin (2005) stated that they were unable to find research that has looked at direct effects of ILTs on work attitudes, and found indirect effects of ILTs on job satisfaction.

In accordance with the theory of planned behavior (Azjen, 1985) which states that attitudes lead to behaviors, LMX is proposed as a mediator in this model because supervisors' attitudes about employees should influence their behaviors towards their employees, which should subsequently influence their relationship with followers. LMX would mediate the relationship between LIFTs and satisfaction because supervisors are required to have formal supervisor-employee relationships based on the organization's contract, but they are not required to go beyond the contractual agreement. In other words, supervisors may be required by the organization to allocate rewards in a fair manner, provide task-related guidance or participate in delivering developmental feedback to all their employees. They are generally not, however, required to have close relationships with their employees. This suggests that supervisors have more discretion in determining with which employees they may develop close relationships that go beyond

the contractual agreement set by the organization. Employees who do not match closely with their supervisors' prototype may be more likely to be out-group members.

Hypothesis 1b: Supervisors' LIFTs will have an indirect effect on employee job satisfaction – the more positive the leader's LIFTs, the higher the employee's level of job satisfaction. This relationship will be mediated by employee LMX. Whereby

Organizational commitment. Organizational commitment has also been widely studied in the literature because it has been shown to have significant consequences for organizations. Porter, Steers, Mowday and Boulian (1974) defined organizational commitment as the degree to which employees identify with and are involved with their particular organization, accept the organization's goals and values, are willing to work on its behalf, and maintain membership with their organization. Commitment is positively correlated with job involvement and negatively correlated with stress (Mathieu & Zajac, 1990). Research has shown that organizational commitment is negatively correlated with turnover (Allen & Meyer, 1996), and weakly but positively related to job performance (Meyer & Allen, 1997).

LMX has been shown to have a positive relationship with organizational commitment (e.g., Major et al., 1995; Green, Anderson, & Shivers; 1996). Epitropaki and Martin (2005) found an indirect effect of ILTs on organizational commitment where LMX was a mediator. I propose that LIFTs will have an indirect effect on employees' organizational commitment – specifically, more positive LIFTs will have a positive relationship with organizational commitment.

Hypothesis 1c: Supervisors' LIFTs will have an indirect effect on employees' organizational commitment – the more positive the supervisor's LIFTs, the higher the employee's level of organizational commitment. This relationship will be mediated by employee LMX.

Method

Sample

For this study, I defined a work group as consisting of a supervisor and his/her direct employees – specifically, the work groups consisted of one supervisor and one to six of his/her direct employees. Data were collected from 81 supervisors and 180 employees from various organizations across several states in the United States. In terms of the supervisors' function at work, roughly 33% of the supervisors were involved in retail and sales, 22% of supervisors were involved in professional services such as consulting and accounting, 18% were involved in administrative support, 6% were involved in health care, 6% were involved in customer support, 6% were involved in research and development, 6% were involved in manufacturing and production, while 4% were involved in marketing. Employees were 27.43 years old on average, while supervisors were 34.56 years old on average. Supervisors reported working in a supervisory position for an average of 7.64 years, and they reported supervising their current group members for an average of 3.26 years. Supervisors reported working an average of 46 hours per week, ranging from 17 hours per week for one supervisor and 80 hours per week for another supervisor.

Procedure

Undergraduate research assistants received training to recruit work groups. The research assistants were instructed to first approach the supervisor to get permission for survey participation, and then approach employees. To avoid any instances where a supervisor might influence or coerce employees to participate in the study, the research assistants reminded each worker that their participation is voluntary. Participants were given information about the study and participant confidentiality, along with instructions to take a survey online. Participants were also given an alphanumerical code that would help the researchers to identify in which group each participant belonged.

Measures

Leader's implicit followership theories (LIFTs). The survey measured supervisors on their perceptions of followers (LIFTs) with an 18 item, 6 factor scale developed by Sy (2010). The six factors are Industry, Enthusiasm, Good Citizen, Conformity, Insubordination, and Incompetence. Each factor is represented by three items – for example, Industry is represented by "Hardworking", "Productive", and "Goes above and beyond", while Insubordination is represented by "Arrogant", "Rude", and "Bad temper". Participants were given a list of these items and asked to indicate the extent to which they believed each item was characteristic of followers on a 10 point scale (*1 = not at all characteristic*; *10 = extremely characteristic*).

Note that supervisors were asked about followers in general, not any particular followers or group of followers. Reliability analyses for the LIFT subscales yielded Cronbach's alphas of .92, .71, .75, .71, .82 and .80 respectively (Table 1). Each supervisor is scored on each subscale rather than by aggregating the subscales. The

Industry, Enthusiasm and Good Citizen subscales could be aggregated to represent a general "Positive LIFTs" score, while Conformity, Insubordination and Incompetence could be aggregated to represent a general "Negative LIFTs" score.

Leader-member exchange (LMX). LMX was measured using a seven item scale which was rated on a 5-point Likert scale and was designed to measure LMX from the supervisor's and employees' perspectives (Paglis & Green, 2002). Only the employees' perspectives of LMX were included in this study because employees' LMX ratings should be more strongly related to employee outcomes than supervisors' LMX ratings. Reliability analyses showed that the Cronbach's alpha was .91. The employee LMX scale measured employees' perceptions of LMX with his or her work group supervisor. Sample items from the employee LMX scale are "I know where I stand with my supervisor . . . I usually know how satisfied he/she is with what I do", and "My supervisor understands my job problems and needs". The scale items are listed in Table 2.

Job satisfaction. Employees' job satisfaction was measured using a 4 item scale adapted from Quinn and Shepard (1974). The items were scored on a 7-point Likert scale. Reliability analysis for the satisfaction scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .95. Sample items from the scale are "If a good friend of mine told me that he/she was interested in working in a job like mine I would strongly recommend it", and "All in all, I am very satisfied with my current job". The scale items are listed in Table 3.

Organizational commitment. Employees' organizational commitment was measured using a six item scale adapted from Allen and Meyer (1990; Meyer, Allen & Smith, 1993). The scale was rated on a 7-point Likert scale. Reliability analysis for the commitment scale yielded a Cronbach's alpha of .84. Sample items from the scale are "I

would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization", and "I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization". The scale items are listed in table 4.

Analyses

The data were analyzed using hierarchical linear modeling (HLM; Bryk & Raudenbush, 1987; Hofmann & Gavin, 1998). HLM is used to test hypotheses that involve performing statistical analyses across multiple levels. Examples of various levels are the individual level, group level, and organizational level in an organizational context, or students, teachers and the principal within a school. Hofmann and Gavin (1998) addressed the utility of HLM when studying individuals within organizations due to the presence of nesting. Nesting occurs in multilevel datasets when observations in a sample are non-independent of each other (Park, Eveland, & Cudeck, 2007/2008). The presence of nesting in one's sample has important consequences for data analysis techniques. For example, variance estimates can be erroneous if assuming that observations are independent in multilevel data, because individuals from the same organization or school will share some of the same environmental characteristics (Arnold, 1992). Conducting a study with groups of employees from various companies is a different case than randomly selecting individuals for one's sample because the amount of variance within groups and schools can be very similar, whereas the amount of variance between groups and schools can be very different. An example of differences in variance due to nesting is that a group of employees from one organization may share some unique similarities such as having the same supervisor and experiencing the same organizational climate, whereas employees from another organization will probably share some similarities that are unique to that group (e.g., sharing the same supervisor and organizational climate) but

different from other groups. Since groups of employees can vary as a function of their supervisor's characteristics and the organization that they represent, researchers recommend using HLM to account for these differences in variance instead of ordinary least squares (OLS) methods. While nesting violates the OLS assumption of independent observations and can result in overestimating the relationships between variables, HLM accounts for nesting during statistical analyses (Hoffman & Gavin, 1998).

There are two levels of interest in this study – level 1 concerns employees and level 2 concerns supervisors. The first-level variables are variables at the employee level – in this model, these variables are employees' LMX, employees' job satisfaction, and employees' organizational commitment. The second-level variables are variables at the supervisor level – in this model, the only second-level variable included is supervisors' LIFTs. All the hypotheses that have been proposed for this study involve main effects of LIFTs (level 2) on employee-level outcomes (level 1). These relationships can be adequately analyzed using HLM.

Results

The data were analyzed using the Mx (Neale, 2002) and MPlus 5.2 programs (Muthen & Muthen, 2007). During the data cleaning stage, groups that were considered ineligible to be included in the analyses were eliminated. Specifically, groups in which only the supervisor had taken the survey or only the employees had taken the survey were eliminated from the analyses because these groups would not be helpful in examining the influence of supervisors' LIFTs on employee outcomes. Both pieces of information are needed for multilevel modeling and to test the hypotheses presented above. A total of 49 groups were included in the analyses, including 49 supervisors and 138 employees. Eight

groups involving a supervisor and only one employee were included in the analyses to help keep the sample of adequate size.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Since Sy's (2010) LIFTs scale is new and has not been widely used, I conducted confirmatory factor analysis using the Mx software program (Neale, 2002) to see whether the structure of the scale found in Sy's study would be replicated in the current study. As mentioned before, Sy found support for a hierarchical factor model with six first-order factors and two second-order factors. Specifically, the three positive LIFTs factors loaded onto a higher-order positive LIFTs factor and the three negative LIFTs factors loaded onto a higher-order negative LIFTs factor. Sy (2010) recommended this second-order model on theoretical grounds, but he also found that a model containing only the six first-order LIFTs factors fit marginally better than the second order two-factor model. Theoretically, this means that the six subscales would each be measuring a distinct piece of the LIFTs construct, and would be conceptually different from the second order two-factor model because it would not be following the positive and negative LIFTs distinction. Although I initially set out to compare these two models, the second-order model did not converge, most likely due to the relatively small sample size. Therefore, I focused on the six-factor model as the primary model of interest in subsequent analyses, as this model was also supported by Sy's work. Details of these analyses are presented next.

A single factor model, with all items representing a single latent LIFTs factor, was compared to the null model as a baseline to compare with subsequent models. As expected, this model did not fit the data well overall ($X^2_{135} = 324.85$, $p < .01$) with a

normed fit index (NFI; Bentler, 1990) of 0.55, a Tucker-Lewis index (TLI; Tucker & Lewis, 1973) of 0.62, and a root mean squared error of approximation (RMSEA) of 0.15. Values greater than 0.90 for the NFI and TLI and less than 0.08 for the RMSEA are usually considered as acceptable fit (McDonald & Ho, 2002). The hypothesized six factor model had a better fit than the single factor model, ($X^2_{120} = 192.55$, $p < .01$; $\Delta X^2_{15} = 132.30$, $p < .01$), with the overall goodness-of-fit indices improving but still indicating a less than acceptable fit (NFI = 0.76; TLI = 0.84; RMSEA = 0.10). I also tested a two-factor model, representing a simplified version of the second-order model, in which each of the nine positive LIFTs items loaded directly onto a general "positive LIFTs" factor and the nine negative LIFTs items loaded directly onto a "negative LIFTs" factor. This model fit better than the single factor model, but not as well as the six-factor model ($X^2_{134} = 287.74$, $p < .01$; $\Delta X^2_{14} = 95.19$, $p < .01$), with the overall goodness-of-fit indices still indicating a less than acceptable fit (NFI = 0.60; TLI = 0.69; RMSEA = 0.15). The factor loadings for the six factor and two factor models are presented in Table 5.

As the fit indices for the six-factor model were not adequate, I tested alternative factor structures by examining items that contributed a sizeable amount of misfit to the scale and testing alternate models based on this information. Following the recommendation of McDonald (1999), I examined the standardized residuals to see which items were not well described by the model. Item 11, "Follows trends" from the Conformity dimension, had residuals greater than 0.10 with 12 of the other 17 items, suggesting that this item did not fit with the others as expected. Further, the other two items in the Conformity scale had numerous large residuals as well; therefore, the "Conformity" subscale was dropped from the scale. The resulting five factor model

appeared to have a better fit than the six-factor model ($X^2_{80} = 117.78$, $p < .01$; $\Delta X^2_{40} = 74.77$, $p < .01$), with the overall goodness-of-fit indices improving from the six factor model to approach adequate fit (NFI = 0.84; TLI = 0.88; RMSEA = 0.09).

As no clear patterns appeared among the remaining residuals, I proceeded with the five factor model in the multilevel analysis. However, the initial multilevel model did not fit well. Upon inspection, the Insubordination factor appeared to be responsible for a substantial amount of misfit in the model. When this factor was removed, a model including the remaining four LIFTs factors, LMX, and employee satisfaction and commitment fit the data more adequately than the five factor model. I tested the resulting four factor model in Mx and found that this model fit better than the five factor model, ($X^2_{48} = 77.68$, $p < .01$; $\Delta X^2_{32} = 40.1$, $p < .01$), with the overall goodness-of-fit indices showing comparable levels of fit compared to the five factor model (NFI = 0.89; TLI = 0.84; RMSEA = 0.11). Therefore, the four factor model was retained as the final model. To see the correlations between the four factors, refer to Table 9.

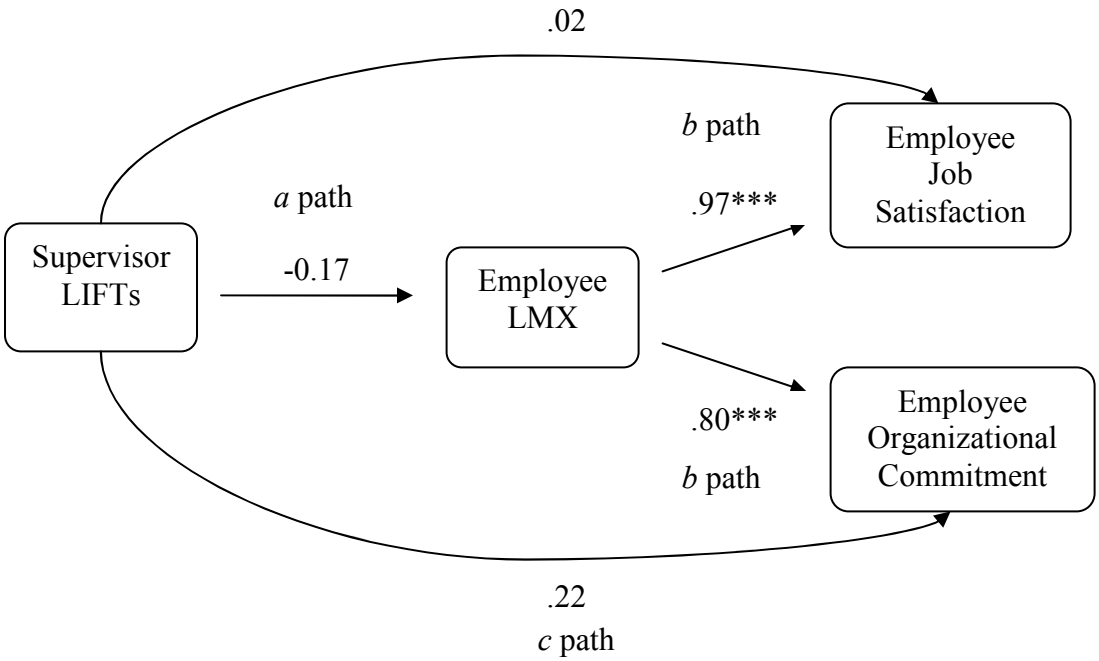

Figure 2. Multilevel analyses results for the proposed model

Multilevel analysis

The multilevel analyses required to test the multilevel model were conducted using the Mplus 5.2 program (Muthen & Muthen, 2007). The model being tested is a mediation structural equation model (e.g., Preacher, Zyphur & Zhang, 2010) where several paths are being tested simultaneously across two levels. The *a* paths in the model represent the relationship between the predictor and the mediator – which in this study, represents the relationship between supervisor LIFTs (i.e., Industry, Enthusiasm, Good Citizen, and Incompetence) and employee LMX (Figure 2). The *b* paths in the model represent the relationship between the mediator and the outcome variables, which in this study, represent the relationship between employee LMX and employee job satisfaction, and between employee LMX and employee organizational commitment. The *c* paths in the model represent the direct relationship between the predictor and the outcome

variables (Baron & Kenny, 1986). The LIFTs variable was analyzed as having between-groups variance only. That is, LIFTs vary between supervisors (e.g., one supervisor has more negative LIFTs than another supervisor), but LIFTS cannot vary within supervisors. The employee level variables were measured as varying between and within employees. LMX was measured at the employee level because employees' perceptions of the supervisor-employee relationship should be related to employee outcomes more strongly than the supervisors' perception of the supervisor-employee relationship. This should be the case because job attitudes such as satisfaction and commitment should vary among employees who work for the same supervisor (within group effect), as well as vary from work group to work group (between group effect).

The intraclass correlation (ICC), in this case, indicates the level of variance in the employees' LIFT scores that can be explained by group membership or nesting within groups. The ICC values for the outcome variables ranged between .33 and .39, indicating that between 33% and 39% of the variance in these outcomes across employees was accounted for by group membership. Specifically, 36% of the variance in employee LMX, 33% of the variance in job satisfaction, and 39% of the variance in commitment were accounted for by group membership. The fit indices indicated that the model is approaching adequate fit ($X^2_{24} = 292.75$, $p < .01$; CFI = .93; TLI = .85; RMSEA = .11). The *a* path, the relationship between LIFTs and LMX, was not significant ($\beta = -0.17$, $p = .41$). Therefore, hypothesis 1a was not supported. The *b* paths were both significant. The *b* paths were estimated based on the between level of analysis, which is consistent with Preacher, Zyphur and Zhang's (2010) approach. The relationship between employee satisfaction and employee LMX was significant ($\beta = .97$, $p < .01$), as well as the

relationship between commitment and LMX (β = .80, p < .01). However, the between level indirect effect of supervisor LIFTs on employee satisfaction through LMX was not significant (β =.02, p = .87), and the between level indirect effect of supervisor LIFTs on employee commitment through LMX was also not significant (β = .22, p = .12). This means that hypotheses 1b and 1c were not supported. Overall, the employee level variables (i.e., LMX perceptions, job satisfaction and organizational commitment) were significantly related to each other, while the LIFTs variable did not significantly correlate with any of the employee level variables. For correlations between the LIFTs dimensions and the employee outcomes, refer to Table 6. For inter-item correlations for the individual LIFTs items, refer to Tables 7 and 8.

Discussion

The results did not support the hypotheses that supervisors' LIFTs would have a direct positive effect on employees' LMX, that LIFTs would have an indirect effect on employees' job satisfaction, or that LIFTs would have an indirect effect on employees' organizational commitment. In fact, LIFTs were not related to any employee level variables in this study. This pattern is inconsistent with the findings in other studies involving LIFTs, where supervisors' LIFTs have been shown to predict employee level outcomes such as job performance and well being (e.g., Johnson & Kedharnath, 2010; Kruse, 2010). I conducted a post hoc exploratory factor analysis (EFA; e.g., Cattell, 1966) after examining the confirmatory factor results to see what factors were formed in the data. The EFA results indicated a four factor model. The factor loadings suggested that all nine of the positive LIFTs items loaded onto an underlying factor. The "Follows trends" item from the conformity factor loaded onto a separate factor than the other

conformity items, while the incompetence and insubordination factors loaded onto separate factors. While the factors identified in the EFA results are slightly different than the factors identified in the CFA, they are generally consistent with the CFA results because the positive LIFTs factors are strongly correlated in the CFA results, suggesting that these factors could potentially fit together under one common factor. The negative LIFTs factors load onto different factors in the EFA results, which is consistent with the patterns found in the CFA results. In other words, the EFA results do not suggest a drastically different factor structure than the factor structure identified in the CFA.

The inconsistent findings from the multilevel analyses may be somewhat explained by the methodological limitations of this study. One methodological explanation is that the level of social desirability in survey responses may have been high, even though participants were informed that the survey results would be kept confidential. Social desirability has been shown to distort survey responses and decrease construct and predictive validity (e.g., Mueller-Hanson, Heggestad, & Thornton, 2003; Murphy & Dzieweczynski, 2005), thus getting away from the true relationships between variables. In this sample, social desirability may have been particularly salient for supervisors in their LIFTs ratings because they may have felt that their views of followers being arrogant or bad tempered were socially undesirable views to have about employees. As a result, their LIFT scale scores may not have reflected their true beliefs.

Common method bias (Campbell & Fiske, 1959) is another possible explanation for these results. Variables measured from the same source (employees) were highly related to one another, while variables from different sources were minimally related. It is possible that same-source effects caused the correlations among employee-reported

variables to be inflated, but this is not necessarily the case (Conway & Lance, 2010). The relationship between the LIFTs variable and the employee level variables may actually be underestimated in this case. Finally, it is possible that participants' level of motivation to respond thoughtfully was low because the survey was administered online, and there was no reward offered for participation.

In addition to these methodological issues, however, there are also several possible conceptual reasons why the relationship between supervisor LIFTs and the employee level variables was virtually nonexistent in this study. As LIFTs theory is still quite new, consideration of these issues can help to develop the theory for the future. First, it could be that there are important steps missing in the link between a supervisor's perceptions and the relationship between the supervisor and his or her employees. The causal chain of events starting from a supervisor's LIFTs to his or her employees' perceptions of the supervisor-employee relationship may generally involve the following steps: 1) the supervisor's assumptions about followers' traits, 2) the supervisor's behaviors towards the followers, 3) the employees' cognitive and emotional reactions towards these behaviors, and 4) the employees' perceptions of the supervisor-employee relationship based on their reactions towards the supervisor's *behaviors*. An aspect of the causal link that may have contributed to the results of this study are the behaviors that the supervisor performs that influence the supervisor-employee relationship. The behaviors that the supervisor performs are likely to have an influence on the perceived quality of the supervisor-employee relationship from the employee point of view, in addition to the leader's perceptions of followers. It is not likely that all supervisors with generally negative LIFTs will necessarily act on their negative LIFTs. In other words, followers

may not get a glimpse of their supervisor's LIFTs if the supervisor is good at masking his or her true perceptions of followers. For example, a supervisor who thinks that followers are generally slow and uneducated may mask these thoughts so as to avoid being labeled by others as "cruel" or "insensitive". Leaders with generally positive LIFTs may also learn to modify their behaviors over time if they have become labeled as "too easygoing" or "naïve" when it comes to managing employees. Future research on LIFTs should include supervisors' behaviors as a mediator between LIFTs and employee outcomes to examine the influence of LIFTs on leaders' behaviors and the influence of those behaviors on employee outcomes.

Second, this study suggests a need for greater attention to the measurement and multidimensional nature of LIFTs. Although the results here were consistent with Sy's (2010) finding that a model containing six discrete LIFT factors is a better fit than other models, even this model is problematic. Although I could not directly test Sy's hypothesized second-order model, which proposed underlying positive and negative LIFTs factors with three subdimensions each, the correlations among scales did not appear to be consistent with such a model. The three positive LIFTs scales were highly correlated, suggesting that an underlying "Positive LIFTs" factor is plausible. However, the three negative LIFTs scales did not show such a pattern. The Insubordination scale was nearly uncorrelated with the other two scales, and some items in the Conformity scale were negatively correlated with the other negative LIFTs scales. Although it is possible that these results were affected by the methodological issues discussed above, they generally replicate the findings from other LIFTs studies (e.g., Sy, 2010) in that the positive LIFTs dimensions appear to be related to one another while the negative LIFTs

dimensions do not all have significant correlations with each other. For example, the Conformity dimension does not significantly correlate with the Insubordination dimension in Sy's study, which is what I found as well.

These results indicate that LIFTs may be more complicated than the prototype/anti-prototype (positive/negative) model suggested by ILT. Although positive LIFTs seem to be found together, negative LIFTs seem to be relatively independent. Supervisors who view followers as insubordinate may not necessarily view them as incompetent. The Conformity dimension was particularly problematic in the factor analysis – perhaps because these behaviors may not necessarily be perceived as negative by supervisors. This dimension may not correlate with the other negative LIFTs dimensions because behaviors such as being soft spoken or following trends may be seen as characteristics of followers who follow directions, do not unnecessarily challenge the supervisor, and are easy to work with. One item in particular, "Follows trends", did not fit with the other negative LIFTs items. This item's residual misfit points to the possibility that thinking of followers as following trends may not necessarily be a negative or undesirable characteristic. Expecting followers to follow trends may actually be seen as healthy in a leader-follower relationship because followers who keep up with trends in the sales market, clothing trends or other work-relevant information may come to be seen as more valuable and informative to supervisors. Approximately a third of the supervisors in this sample worked in the retail industry, so the interpretation of the item "Follows trends" may have been interpreted differently among supervisors in retail compared to supervisors in other areas.

Finally, I may not have found overall effects of LIFTs because the matching effect (i.e., the discrepancy between a supervisor's general LIFTs and the specific characteristics of a follower) may be stronger than an overall effect. In other words, the effects of a supervisor's LIFTs on employee outcomes may be more likely observed at a dyadic level than at a group level. Support for the pattern in which negative LIFTs significantly predict employee outcomes only at the dyadic level comes from Epitropaki and Martin's (2005) results, which suggest that positive ILTs dimensions have significant overall effects *and* matching effects, while the negative ILTs dimensions have significant matching effects but not significant overall effects. The results of my study support the idea that the general LIFTs of a supervisor alone may not have a significant enough impact on employees in his or her group.

Future Research

The discussion above suggests a number of avenues for future research. First, additional work is needed to address the measurement and conceptual issues that were observed in this study. A well-validated, well-replicated scale with a stable and interpretable structure is necessary for LIFTs research to progress. In particular, attention should be paid to understanding the nature of negative LIFTs. The distinction between prototypic and anti-prototypic traits is not clearly articulated in the ILT literature and appears to be even more complicated when applied to LIFTs.

Once the conceptual and measurement issues that currently exist for the LIFTs construct are adequately addressed, LIFTs research should shift focus from overall effects to the matching effect of LIFTs on employee outcomes. For example, examining the match between leaders' LIFTs and his or her followers' specific qualities would extend

the model tested in this study. I would hypothesize that the stronger the agreement between a supervisor's LIFTs and his/her employee's characteristics, the better the LMX between that supervisor and employee dyad. Employees whose characteristics closely match their supervisors' LIFTs should be more likely to have a high quality relationship with their supervisor. According to LMX theory, employees who have a closer relationship with their supervisor than out-group members should have higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Future research on LIFTs should also focus on the influence of LIFTs on supervisor behaviors. For example, supervisor behaviors may be a mediator between LIFTs and employee LMX because the behaviors that supervisors exhibit based on their LIFTs should influence the quality of the relationship between a supervisor and his or her followers.

I propose one major change that could improve the quality of data in future studies. It may be the case that the current definition of LIFTs and the LIFTs scale do not adequately capture variations in individuals' perceptions of followers. One supervisor's definition of LIFTs and emphasis on various characteristics may not line up with another supervisor's definition of LIFTs and emphasis on various characteristics. For example, Tom's LIFTs dimensions may closely reflect the dimensions provided in the current LIFTs scale, while Suzanne's LIFTs dimensions may not reflect the dimensions provided in the current scale. Their emphasis on certain dimensions may vary, which is not captured in the current scale. This can pose a problem both at the conceptual and measurement levels. It would be valuable to conduct a study in which supervisors are asked about their perception of LIFTs instead of only completing the current scale, and see how these individual perceptions predict various supervisor and employee outcomes.

One way to do this would be to ask each supervisor to list the five most important characteristics of followers, and rate their followers on those five characteristics. This analysis would indicate whether it may be better to measure LIFTs using this method rather than to give them the current scale. This analysis would have major implications for LIFTs at a conceptual level as well as at the measurement level. If results show that supervisors' individual dimensions predict outcomes more strongly than the dimensions presented in the current scale, it would indicate that LIFTs should be measured at the individual level to reflect each person's LIFTs.

Contributions

Despite the lack of support for the hypotheses, this study contributes to the development of LIFTs theory in several ways. A methodological strength of this study is the use of data from different organizations across different industries, which should increase the generalizability of these findings. Conceptually, the LIFTs theory is promising partially because it is based on an established theory (implicit leadership theory). While it is conceptually similar to ILTs, it appears that LIFTs are not directly parallel to ILTs. Specifically, negative LIFTs may be more complex in nature than negative ILTs. Another strength of this study is that I used a multilevel modeling technique to analyze the data, which was appropriate in addressing common trends that occur in multilevel data, such as nesting effects. Finally, this study contributes to the existing literature on LIFTs because several findings were consistent with the results of other studies, particularly the support for the factor structure of LIFTs.

This study highlights a number of conceptual, measurement, and methodological issues in the LIFTs theory and measure that need to be addressed in detail. If these issues

can be resolved, LIFTs theory has the potential to contribute a unique perspective to the field of leadership by allowing for a more holistic view of leader-follower dynamics (i.e., incorporating followers as a central part of this theory). Theoretically, LIFTs are an antecedent to behaviors, and can serve to explain certain leader behaviors. For example, LIFTs may help to explain why some leaders behave towards followers in a developmental manner, while others behave towards followers in a strictly task-oriented manner.

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1

Leader's Implicit Followership Theories scale items

Factors	Items
Industry	Hardworking
(α =.92)	Productive
	Goes above and beyond
Enthusiasm	Excited
(α =.71)	Outgoing
	Happy
Good Citizen	Loyal
(α =.75)	Reliable
	Team player
Conformity	Easily Influenced
(α =.71)	Follows Trends
	Soft Spoken
Insubordination	Arrogant
(α =.82)	Rude
	Bad Tempered
Incompetence	Uneducated
(α =.80)	Slow
	Inexperienced

Table 2

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) scale items

1. I know where I stand with my supervisor . . . I usually know how satisfied he/she is with what I do.
2. My supervisor understands my job problems and needs.
3. My supervisor recognizes my potential for advancement within the organization.
4. Regardless of how much formal authority he/she has built into his/her position, my supervisor would use his/her power to help me solve problems in my work.
5. Again, regardless of the amount of formal authority my supervisor has, he/she would "bail me out" at his/her own expense.
6. I have enough confidence in my supervisor that I would defend and justify his/her decision if he/she was not present to do so.
7. I would characterize my working relationship with my supervisor as extremely effective.

Table 3

Job satisfaction scale items

1. If a good friend of mine told me that he/she was interested in working in a job like mine I would strongly recommend it.
2. All in all, I am very satisfied with my current job.
3. In general, my job measures up to the sort of job I wanted when I took it.
4. Knowing what I know now, if I had to decide all over again whether to take my job, I would.

Table 4

Organizational commitment scale items

1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization.
2. I do not feel 'emotionally attached' to this organization (Reverse coded).
3. This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me.
4. I enjoy discussing my organization with people outside it.
5. I do not feel like part of the family at this organization (Reverse coded).
6. I do not feel a strong sense of belonging to my organization (Reverse coded).

Table 5

Factor loadings for the LIFTs scale in the two factor and six factor model

Factors	Items	λ (2 factor - Positive)	λ (2 factor - Negative)	λ (6 factor model)					
Industry	Hardworking	.91		.92					
	Productive	.83		.82					
	Goes above and beyond	.91		.91					
Enthusiasm	Excited	.72			.72				
	Outgoing	.66			.66				
	Happy	.81			.83				
Good Citizen	Loyal	.56				.58			
	Reliable	.59				.74			
	Team player	.61				.89			
Conformity	Easily Influenced		.64				.71		
	Follows Trends		.27				.54		
	Soft Spoken		.63				.72		
Insubordination	Arrogant		.29					.67	
	Rude		.30					.81	
	Bad Tempered		.51					.88	
Incompetence	Uneducated		.73						.73
	Slow		.80						.82
	Inexperienced		.66						.66

Table 6

Means, Standard Deviations, Coefficient Alphas, and Correlations among LIFTs and employee outcomes

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. LIFTs Industry	6.35	2.12	(.92)								
2. LIFTs Enthusiasm	5.93	2.24	**.81****	(.71)							
3. LIFTs Good Citizen	7.15	1.92	**.66****	**.61****	(.75)						
4. LIFTs Conformity	6.09	2.42	**-.43****	**-.37****	.00	(.71)					
5. LIFTs Insubordination	3.17	1.95	**-.20***	-.11	**-.20***	-.07	(.82)				
6. LIFTs Incompetence	3.91	2.13	**-.59****	**-.60****	**-.48****	**.49****	.16	(.80)			
7. Employee LMX	28.10	5.43	**-.20***	**-.18***	.07	.04	-.14	-.12	(.91)		
8. Employee Commitment	27.63	7.55	-.07	-.02	.12	.11	-.17	**-.28****	**.55****	(.84)	
9. Employee Satisfaction	21.37	6.27	-.17	-.15	-.02	-.03	-.16	-.08	**.62****	**.69****	(.95)

Note: Coefficient alphas are reported along the diagonal

Table 7

Means, standard deviations and inter-item correlations among positive LIFTs items (Industry, Enthusiasm, and Good Citizen dimensions)

	Mean	SD	Hardworking	Productive	Goes above and beyond	Excited	Outgoing	Happy	Loyal	Reliable	Team player
Hardworking	6.83	2.11	1.00								
Productive	6.21	2.03	0.80	1.00							
Goes above and beyond	6.01	2.23	0.85	0.76	1.00						
Excited	5.71	2.10	0.63	0.59	0.62	1.00					
Outgoing	6.02	2.59	0.59	0.54	0.60	0.36	1.00				
Happy	6.07	1.98	0.71	0.68	0.71	0.70	0.50	1.00			
Loyal	7.19	1.80	0.47	0.48	0.47	0.61	0.39	0.53	1.00		
Reliable	6.80	2.19	0.49	0.56	0.41	0.51	0.14	0.41	0.41	1.00	

Table 8

Means, standard deviations and inter-item correlations among negative LIFTs items (Conformity, Insubordination and Incompetence dimensions)

	Mean	SD	Easily Influenced	Follows Trends	Soft Spoken	Arrogant	Rude	Bad Tempered	Uneducated	Slow	Inexperienced
Easily Influenced	6.57	2.71	1.00								
Follows Trends	6.29	2.40	0.43	1.00							
Soft Spoken	5.62	2.23	0.45	0.49	1.00						
Arrogant	3.23	2.05	0.06	-0.29	-0.23	1.00					
Rude	2.87	1.80	-0.01	-0.16	-0.17	0.60	1.00				
Bad Tempered	3.30	2.07	0.27	-0.06	-0.03	0.54	0.67	1.00			
Uneducated	3.36	2.30	0.47	0.42	0.50	-0.03	-0.13	0.08	1.00		
Slow	3.78	2.03	0.39	0.10	0.28	0.14	0.21	0.31	0.55	1.00	
Inexperienced	4.67	2.09	0.33	0.01	0.37	0.18	0.04	0.21	0.58	0.58	1.00

Table 9

Correlations between the latent factors in the final four factor model

	Industry	Enthusiasm	Good Citizen	Incompetence
Industry	1			
Enthusiasm	.98	1		
Good Citizen	.72	.77	1	
Incompetence	-.74	-.72	-.49	1

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