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## Leaders, Followers, and the Space Between: A Three Dimensional View of Leader Attention and Decision-making

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Doctor of Philosophy

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LEADERS, FOLLOWERS, AND THE SPACE BETWEEN:  
A THREE DIMENSIONAL VIEW OF  
LEADER ATTENTION AND DECISION-MAKING

(Thesis Format: Monograph)

by

Karen T. MacMillan

Graduate Program in Business Administration

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

The University of Western Ontario

London, Ontario, Canada

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## Abstract

A quasi-experimental field study explores how follower voice, leader regulatory focus and leader-member exchange (LMX) affect leader attention and decision-making. The model responds to calls for more work into the interplay between leaders and followers and the effect on leadership (Avolio, 2007; Howell & Shamir, 2005), the integration of top-down and bottom-up processes that affect attention (Ocasio, 2011; Rerup, 2009); and the types, tactics, targets, and outcomes of follower voice (Morrison, 2011). Twenty-seven established leaders and their followers completed on-line instruments in a time-lagged fashion. Leaders were asked to respond to common managerial issues based on the General Management In-Box, a well-known in-basket exercise (Joines, 2011). Each scenario was accompanied by advisory messages that varied in (1) LMX level of the follower sender and (2) promotive or prohibitive voice type (Liang, Farh, & Farh, 2012). Results show the quality of the relationship between the leader and the follower message sender influenced leader interest and decision-making directly and as a moderator of the path between follower voice type and leader decision-making. Regulatory focus did not moderate the relationship between follower voice and leader attention. Contrary to predictions, promotive voice (messages about opportunities) influenced leader attention and decisions more than prohibitive voice (messages about threats). The contributions of these findings to the follower, voice, attention, LMX, and regulatory focus literatures are discussed.

## Keywords

Leadership, Followers, Followership, Regulatory Focus, Attention, LMX, Decision-making, Voice

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# 1 Introduction

“We are here to awaken from the illusion of our separateness.”

- Thich Nhat Hanh

Leadership is a popular topic amongst organizational researchers. Entering ‘leader’ or ‘leadership’ into any major search engine will yield thousands of results. It has been studied extensively from various angles over the last century (Hernandez, Eberly, Avolio, & Johnson, 2011). To name but a few, researchers have looked at personality characteristics of leaders (Judge & Bono, 2000); employee versus production oriented approaches (Kahn & Katz, 1953); transformational and transactional exchanges (Bass, 1985; Bass & Riggio, 2006; Bono & Judge, 2004; Burns, 1978; Howell & Avolio, 1993); the influence of situational factors (Fiedler, 1964; House, 1971); and cross-cultural differences (House, Javidan, Hanges, & Dorfman, 2002).

The implication underlying much of this work is that it is important to understand leadership so we can select and develop good leaders and maximize the positive outcomes associated with effective leadership. Practitioners and scholars alike seem to see leadership as critical to organizational success. Leadership has been found to predict a variety of outcomes, such as performance (Lowe & Galen Kroeck, 1996); empowerment, motivation, and creativity (Zhang & Bartol, 2010); engagement (Zhu, Avolio, & Walumbwa, 2009), and follower job satisfaction (Piccolo et al., 2012). Yet organizational researchers have struggled to build a comprehensive and satisfying understanding of leadership (Avolio, 2007). This may be because much of the leadership literature has been compartmentalized – with the focal point (usually the leader) being but a segment of the phenomenon.

The purpose of this dissertation is to take a broader view of leadership that encompasses a simultaneous consideration of the leader, the follower, and the relationship between them. I do this by examining how a critical leadership resource (attention) and a crucial leadership activity (decision-making) are affected by a top-down element (regulatory focus of the leader), a bottom-up element (type of follower voice), and a middle-ground element (leader-follower relationship). In sum, I want to build a better understanding of how leadership is influenced by the leader, the follower, and the relationship between the two. This multi-faceted consideration is designed to contribute to a fuller understanding of the interplay between leader and follower.

Traditionally, the role of leader has been the focal point in much of the leadership research. There may be a number of factors to support the direction of this spotlight. The romantic view of leaders as omnipotent, heroic figures is compelling (Yukl, 1998) and has served as fodder for countless movies, plays, and other cultural narratives. It can be both exciting and comforting to imagine a select few with special powers to save the day (or the organization). In addition, leaders themselves are not likely to argue with this conception of the criticality of the leader role because it can feed into a self-serving bias that boosts self-esteem.

Another, smaller group of scholars have suggested looking beyond the leader to understand leadership. Meindl (1995) found some support when he countered the traditional leader-centric view by arguing for a follower-centred approach to leadership. In this perspective, the social construction of the leader developed by the follower is the critical variable.

The expectations and cognitive prototypes held by followers can affect this social construction of leaders (Foti & Lord, 1987; Lord, Foti, & De Vader, 1984). According to leadership categorization theory (Lord, 1985), followers develop implicit leadership theories (ILTs) about what a leader should be like (Eden & Leviatan, 1975). The degree to which a leader matches these ILTs will affect the leader's influence and the interaction between the leader and follower. ILTs have been shown to influence leader-member exchange (LMX) levels and follower organizational commitment, satisfaction, and well-

being (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005). This approach puts the follower in a much less passive role relative to most traditional leadership theories in that the follower's pre-existing schemas will help to determine leadership outcomes.

Others have encouraged an approach that is more inclusive. Hollander (1992a, 1992b) presented leadership as a process as opposed to a role. Eschewing the traditional, top-down view, he suggested that the reality of leaders and followers is much more interdependent. Burns (1978) also portrayed leadership as a dynamic partnership between the leader and follower. Consistent with this view, the LMX construct developed by Graen (1976) and expanded by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) examines the reciprocal relationships between leaders and followers (Dvir & Shamir, 2003). In this type of approach, leadership is described as being three-pronged, consisting of the leader, the followers, and the relationship, none of which can exist independently of the others (Bennis, 2007).

Although there have been numerous calls for more research into the role of the follower and/or the reciprocal nature of the leader-follower relationship (Avolio, 2007; Howell & Shamir, 2005; Kelley, 1988; Meindl, 1995), the response has been less than expected (Baker, 2007). Even the LMX literature, which espouses a focus on the role of the reciprocal nature of the leader-follower relationship has drifted towards a mostly top-down view. Specifically, much of the work incorporating the LMX construct seems to be one sided as it examines how the leader-follower relationship affects follower-related (as opposed to leader-related) outcomes (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; van Breukelen, Schyns, & Le Blanc, 2006; Wilson, Sin, & Conlon, 2010). For example, Gerstner and Day (1997) conducted a meta-analysis that looked at the connection between LMX and multiple outcomes: follower performance, follower job satisfaction, follower satisfaction with supervisor, follower organizational commitment, follower competence, and follower turnover or intent to turnover. A more recent review of studies (Martin, Epitropaki, Thomas, & Topakas, 2010) also shows a similar preponderance of dependent variables that are attitudinal or behavioural outcomes of followers. One of the most common dependent variables in LMX studies is follower organizational citizenship behaviours (OCB) (Martin et al., 2010). A meta-analysis by Ilies, Nahrgang, and Morgeson (2007)

looked at 50 such empirical studies. Martin et al.'s (2010) review of the LMX literature concludes with the suggestion that we need to more fully consider the bi-directionality of the leader-follower relationship by examining the impact of LMX on leader outcomes. They caution, however, that the impact of LMX on leaders will likely be less than that on followers due to the power differential between the two parties.

Generally speaking, the paucity of empirical studies on the broader approach to the study of leadership may be partly because of this perceived power imbalance between leader and follower. A resource dependency view (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) raises the question of how followers can be influential when they have so little power relative to the leader. Power is a managerial tool, and not something to be shared easily with underlings (Steger, Manners, & Zimmerer, 1982). Followers are often seen as subservient and reliant on leaders for resources such as pay, promotions, and other organizational goods and services. For example, two articles by Detert and colleagues (Detert & Burris, 2007; Detert & Trevino, 2010) use a resource dependency approach to explain why followers voice important messages to leaders. They suggest that followers speak up to leaders because leaders have the power to give attention or resources to the issue and leaders send signals about which messages may be rewarded or punished (Detert & Burris, 2007). Thus the power held by the leader influences what the follower will do.

However, Casciaro and Piskorski (2005) suggest that to use a resource dependency approach, it is important to understand the mutual dependence of both parties. Relying on Emerson's (1962) theory of the relationship between power and dependence, they propose that it is not sufficient to consider only the power distribution in a dyad, it is also important to consider simultaneously the mutual dependence. Burns (1978) hints at this idea when he states that power permeates human interactions and defines power "not as a property or entity or possession but as a *relationship* in which two or more persons tap motivational bases in one another and bring varying resources to bear in the process" (p. 15, italics in original). The power of leaders should not be viewed as unilateral.

In the case of leaders and followers, there has been some recognition that there may be mutual dependence because followers provide some important resources to leaders.

Howell and Shamir (2005) suggest that followers hold power over the leader in several ways: their support can buoy the leader's self-confidence and legitimacy; they control important resources such as data and expertise; and their feedback can validate decisions or expose potential problems. Leaders may use monitoring, organizational routines, and group norms to harness the power of the follower, but most, if not all, followers maintain a significant amount of leeway that can be directed at will. In other words, a follower can behaviourally and emotionally support a leader's decisions and directions, or not. Wilson, Sin and Conlon (2010) offer six categories of resources that followers can provide leaders, including affiliation (commitment and loyalty); service (effort, performance, OCBs); goods (gifts); status (admiration, respect, positive word of mouth which can influence career progression); information (from peers/other departments); and money (follower performance can indirectly affect leader pay).

The mutual dependence of leaders and followers has not been fully explored, but there are broad indications of the interrelationship. For example, leaders can become caught between exerting control over followers and needing their unmonitored cooperation at the same time. Leaders hold resources and sanction over followers, yet followers often hold direct control over the means of production. The best followers may aspire to change their role to that of leader, yet they may be dependent on the leader to make that transition. A strong leader can develop followers who are empowered and dependent on the leader at the same time (Kark, Shamir, & Chen, 2003).

How can we explore this interdependence? One way we could examine the interaction between leader and follower roles may be in the study of leader attention. Attention has been called "one of the oldest and most pivotal issues in psychological science" (Raz & Buhle, 2006, p. 367). Leader attention is important because it is a primary step in determining what gets noticed and what gets ignored, thus setting the stage for much of the action and non-action in an organization. The organizational environment produces a competing, often unmelodious symphony of signals from every direction. It is impossible for leaders to process each message equitably. There simply is not sufficient time. Attention is a limited resource and represents an investment by the person and the organization (Dutton & Webster, 1988). Leaders must decide (consciously or

subconsciously) which signals are important and which are not (Dutton & Webster, 1988).

But even attention has been studied in a fragmented manner. Cognitive scientists have researched the topic for more than a century (Raz & Buhle, 2006) with a strong focus on bottom-up elements such as characteristics of the stimuli (Fox, Derakshan, & Standage, 2011). Organizational scholars have also devoted considerable effort to the examination of attention. According to Ocasio's (1997) attention-based view of the firm, the directions in which leaders place their attention is a key factor affecting organizational decision-making. Attention scholars have taken a lofty view, looking at the highest levels of organizations, mainly ignoring the hierarchical levels below the senior management team (Ambos, Andersson, & Birkinshaw, 2010; Cho & Hambrick, 2006; Daft & Weick, 1984). Generally, organizational attention researchers have showed interest in top-down processes, with few including a consideration of bottom-up processes or the interplay between the two (Ocasio, 2011; Rerup, 2009) .

The issue selling literature has delved deeper into the organization with an examination of how middle managers affect the attention of senior leaders (Ashford, Sutcliffe, & Christianson, 2009; Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, Hayes, & Wierba, 1997). The way middle managers identify and label issues as either threats or opportunities is seen as a pivotal process in focusing the attention of leaders. While this perspective gets away from a completely top-down view by including those below the top level of the organization, it only considers how middle managers affect senior leaders. Senior leader attention is the attention that matters. It does not include a consideration of how non-managerial followers affect the attention of anyone. Also, success in issue selling is measured by time or attention spent on the issue and the change to the credibility of the issue seller (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). It does not consider how the issue selling process affects broader organizational outcomes.

Work on organizational champions has also included a contemplation of how organizational members influence the attention of more senior leaders. Champions are defined as the people who shepherd and push innovation forward in an organization



(Howell, Shea, & Higgins, 2005; Walter, Parboteeah, Riesenhuber, & Hoegl, 2011). A key behaviour of an innovation champion is gaining the support of key senior leaders (Howell, 2005) through influence attempts (Howell et al., 2005). However, this area focuses solely on the integration of new ideas for products or technology, for example.

The voice literature does look at how lower level employees speak up and then garner the attention of leaders, however, there has been very little empirical work on how follower suggestions actually influence leaders (Dutton, Ashford, Lawrence, & Miner-Rubino, 2002). An exception is a study by Burris (2012) that examined how follower voice influenced leader endorsement. This work seems to bypass leader attention, even though it would seem likely that attention would be a prerequisite to leader endorsement.

It is important to understand how followers affect the attention and actions of leaders, since followers are in the front-lines of the organizational environment, and likely have information that leaders do not (Winter, 2006). “Information now penetrates organizations at all levels, and oftentimes the person in a position at the bottom of the traditional hierarchy knows the most about technology implementation, customers, vendors, changes in markets and variations in performance” (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005, p. 368).

Leaders may be dependent on followers for information, and even more so when adaptations to the work situation are being made. Although it may be leaders who decide on which changes to enact, it is usually their followers who have to execute them on a day-to-day basis. Most changes can only be successful if there is an accompanying cascade of adaptations to everyday organizational practices (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). In many situations, followers will be the first (and sometimes only ones) to understand the adaptations that will be necessary to make a new change work since they are closest to the juxtaposition of the change and its new home. Information about the adaptations (e.g., to the workplace or to the change itself) that are required to support the change must be voiced by followers to leaders if leaders are to make effective decisions. Yet we do not know enough about how leaders and followers interact and affect leader attention and decision-making in this context.

This study will explore one facet of leader-follower interdependence by looking at how follower voice affects leaders' responses within a change context. I propose that leader attention and decision-making will be affected by the type of messages (promotive or prohibitive) sent by followers and two variables will moderate the relationships: (1) the regulatory focus of the leader (goal pursuit preference of promotion or prevention) and (2) the quality of the relationship between the leader and follower (LMX level). This model incorporates top-down, bottom-up and middle-ground elements in an effort to capture the multi-dimensional interaction between leaders and followers. This may lead to a more nuanced understanding of leadership and followership.

I contend that leader attention and decisions on change issues are consistent with follower messages when issue framing is aligned with the leader's regulatory focus orientation and when relationship capital is leveraged. In other words, leaders are more likely to listen and make decisions based on voice from followers when: (a) the message fits the active regulatory focus of the leader and (b) the follower has a good relationship with the leader. This offers a three dimensional view in that it looks at: the congruence between the regulatory focus of the leader (top-down) and the message the follower decides to send (bottom-up); and the relationship between the leader and follower (middle-ground).

This study combines a quasi-experimental design within a field study. It asks leaders to make decisions in change-oriented situations based on followers' recommendations. I integrate the literatures on followership, voice, attention, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), regulatory fit and focus, and leader decision making in order to develop my hypotheses. I draw on the theoretical frameworks and foundations of these literatures to build my model, including social-exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1976; Homans, 1961; Thibault & Kelley, 1959), regulatory focus theory (Freitas & Higgins, 2002; Higgins, 2000), resource dependency (Casciaro & Piskorski, 2005; Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978); the attention-based view of the firm (Ocasio, 1997), and issue selling (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). This integration offers a multi-faceted view of the interdependence between leaders and followers that should lead to a deeper understanding of leadership. It responds to calls for more work into the interplay between leaders and followers and the effect on leadership (Avolio, 2007; Howell & Shamir, 2005), the integration of top-

down and bottom-up processes that affect attention (Ocasio, 2011; Rerup, 2009); and the types, tactics, targets, and outcomes of follower voice (Morrison, 2011).

## Chapter 1

### 2 Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

Chapter 2 presents a conceptual model based on a review of the extant literature. The model looks at how message type, leader-follower relationships and regulatory focus influence leader attention and decision-making within the context of a change implementation. To develop these arguments, this chapter is divided into two parts. First, it starts with a literature review of followers, voice, attention, LMX, and regulatory fit and focus. Second, the hypothesized relationships between variables are described.

#### 2.1 Followers

For some time there has been an acknowledgement that to understand leadership, we need to understand followers. Back in the first half of the twentieth century, Mary Parker Follett (Follett, 1924; Metcalf & Urwick, 2003) was clear about her belief that followers were active members of the leadership situation and leaders and followers are alike in that they are both simply followers of a common purpose .

Yet, followers have largely remained the wallflower of the dance, hidden in the shadows while leaders are showered with attention by a variety of beaus. There can be little argument that the topic of followers or followership has generated a paltry amount of interest relative to the topic of leaders (Baker, 2007). With few exceptions (e.g. Hollander, 1964; Hollander & Webb, 1955), followers have been shuffled into the role of bit players – functionally identical, passive, and of little consequence except as conduits through which the leader’s power flows (Avolio, 2007; Baker, 2007; Collinson, 2006).

Part of this bias towards leaders may stem from the ‘Great Man’ theory of leadership that gained dominance in the nineteenth century (Burns, 1978). Leaders were portrayed as divine, heroic individuals who were the fount from which every feat originated. They

were described by one writer as the “creators, of whatsoever the general mass of men contrived to do or to attain; all things that we see standing accomplished in the world are properly the outer material result, the practical realization and embodiment, of Thoughts that dwell in the Great Men sent into the world” (Carlyle, 1888, pp. 2-3). By virtue of these special, in-born characteristics, leaders were seen to have the almost magical ability to influence those around them to follow their will, and thus, to make things happen.

Much of the leadership literature is representative of the view that leaders are the initiators of action and the follower role is to passively respond (Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992). Since leaders play the critical role, both scholars and practitioners have shown a significant amount of interest in understanding how we can identify and/or develop good leaders. One outcome of this emphasis on the leader is that leadership development has focused only on the development of the person in the leader role (Shamir, 2007).

Organizational researchers have worked hard to uncover the traits or characteristics associated with strong leadership, such as aspects of personality or intelligence (Judge & Bono, 2000; Judge, Bono, Ilies, & Gerhardt, 2002; Lord, De Vader, & Alliger, 1986). There has also been a great deal of effort expended to define the behaviours that are representative of good leadership. The behavioural approach has sought to categorize leadership in terms such as: consideration and initiating structure dimensions (Fleishman, 1953); employee-centered and production-centered behaviours (Katz & Kahn, 1952); and transformational, charismatic and transactional leadership (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Bono & Judge, 2003; Conger, 1999; Kark & Shamir, 2002; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Moorman, & R., 1990). For the most part, both trait and behavioural approaches have treated followers as the receivers of action (Northouse, 2004) rather than the takers of action (Hernandez et al., 2011).

Although followers have not been considered equally with leaders in questions of leadership in the last century, followers have received additional notice in recent decades. One explanation for this increased prominence may be found in the social changes that have accompanied this modified perspective. Since the early twentieth century, the typical work environment has evolved from an authoritarian, hierarchical system to a more participative, flattened structure (Baker, 2007). As leaders have delegated more

power and responsibility to the follower, it seems that organizational scholars have developed a greater interest in understanding how followers impact leadership and related work outcomes (Baker, 2007; Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007).

A broad appreciation for the power of the follower seems to be at a nascent stage. Collinson (2006) discusses the potential influence of followers given their numbers relative to leaders and the key fact that leaders are usually followers themselves. Howell and Shamir (2005) explore the myriad ways followers hold power over the leader. Wilson, Sin, and Conlon (2010) have reviewed the numerous resources on which leaders are dependent on followers. Lapierre, Bremner and McMullan (2012) consider how follower behavior drives leaders' display of charismatic leadership.

Shamir (2007) offers an interesting review of how the role of followers in the leadership literature has expanded from one in which the follower is only the recipient of leader influence. He notes that the contingency theorists have acknowledged that follower characteristics can moderate the impact of leaders. As an example, Fiedler's contingency theory (1964, 1971) suggests that the effectiveness of a leadership approach is dependent on aspects of the situation, and characteristics of followers can be considered a relevant factor of the environment. Similarly, House's (1971) path-goal theory also includes a consideration of situational moderators that can affect leadership effectiveness, and follower characteristics are shown to affect leader influence. Hersey and Blanchard (1982) followed this same approach when they proposed a situational leadership theory that depended on the follower's maturity level. Their theory proposes that leaders should move through a number of different approaches (telling, selling, participating, and delegating) relative to the follower readiness. Klein and House (1995) looked at the characteristics of followers that made them open (or susceptible) to charisma. Thus, from a contingency theory view, different leadership approaches will vary in their impact, depending on the characteristics of followers. Although these approaches at least include a consideration of differences between followers, the eventual leadership influence is still portrayed as being uni-directional and always from the leader down to the follower.

In contrast, the social constructionist view gives followers a much more active role (Shamir, 2007). This approach suggests that what is considered ‘true’ or ‘real’ is dependent on the person who is doing the viewing (Burr, 2003). A follower’s ‘reality’ regarding the leader is partially developed from within the follower him/herself (Grint, 2001, 2005). Leader categorization theory (Lord, 1985) suggests that followers cognitively compare leaders to existing implicit perceptions of what a leader should be (Eden & Leviatan, 1975). If at least part of a follower’s perception of the leader matches the follower’s leader prototype or implicit leadership theory (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005), the person will be accepted as a leader. In essence, how a follower responds to a leader will be largely influenced by pre-existing schemas that the follower holds. As an example, DeRue and Ashford (2010) propose that leader and follower identities are co-constructed by both parties through a reciprocal claiming-granting process. While the social constructionist approach does give a greater consideration to followers, the outcomes of leadership are still portrayed as coming from an essentially top-down process. Although followers may vary in how they interpret leader behaviours, leaders are still seen as acting on followers.

A different approach was offered by Meindl (1995), who also used a social constructionist approach in his “follower-centric perspective on leadership” (p. 329). He used the romance of leadership notion (Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985) to highlight the bias that exists towards leaders. He suggested that leaders received too much credit (or blame) for what happens in organizations. Instead, Meindl thought that leaders are merely constructed through the thoughts and experiences of the followers. The behaviour of followers is seen to be less influenced by the leader than by the impact of the social construction process itself. As an example, in this view the actual personality of the leader would be seen to have much less influence on followers than the follower’s perception of the leader’s personality. This departs sharply from other views of leadership in that followers are depicted as being the initiating source that leads to follower outcomes (Meindl, 1995). The follower, via the social construction process, is the one who influences follower behaviour so the follower is the constructor of leadership (Shamir, 2007). There has been some support for this theory (Bligh, Kohles, Pearce, Justin, & Stovall, 2007; Kulich, Ryan, & Haslam, 2007; Weber, Camerer, Rottenstreich,

& Knez, 2001). A meta-analysis by Schyns, Felfe, and Blank (2007) found a small relationship between the romance of leadership and perceptions of transformational leadership. Uhl-Bien (2006) highlights the social constructionist view of relational leadership in her description of leadership as a social process that emerges through the understandings of both leaders and followers.

Other theorists have questioned whether an actual leader is needed for leadership. The substitutes for leadership theory (Kerr & Jermier, 1978) posits that when followers have a high degree of skill and motivation, there may not be a need for a formal leader. Self-leadership theories suggest that even though the leader may support certain actions, behaviour is mostly controlled by internal forces (Manz, 1986). Self-managed followers are able to influence how work gets done, while even further down the continuum, self-led followers can also influence what work gets done and determine the strategic reasons that lead to overall objectives (Stewart, Courtright, & Manz, 2011).

Shared or distributed leadership theories also deemphasize the traditional leader role by putting the locus of leadership on the followers or the collective (Denis, Langlely, & Sergi, 2012; Fitzgerald, Ferlie, McGivern, & Buchanan, 2013; Hernandez et al., 2011; Pearce & Conger, 2003). Rather than an individual, formal leader making all decisions and directing all behaviour, this view suggests members of the group lead each other to attain group or organizational objectives (Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007; Pearce & Conger, 2003). Leadership can exist simultaneously in one or more (or all) group members, or rotate among people depending on expertise levels within followers (Bass & Bass, 2008; Pearce & Conger, 2003).

Others reject the idea of self-leadership or shared leadership and the inherent view of leadership as consisting of particular behaviours. Shamir (2007) argues that leadership is not just an activity, it is in essence a social relationship wherein one member has a disproportionate amount of non-coercive influence over one or more others – thus two roles are required, by definition. He argues that in our quest to develop a fuller understanding of leadership, it is not necessary to disregard the leader role in order to make room for the perspective of followers. He makes a case for moving our view of



followers from one of passive recipients to active co-producers of the leadership relationship.

Bennis (2007) also portrayed leadership as a relationship between leaders, followers and their common purpose – each dependent on the others. Others argue against this conceptualization because it still allows the follower role to be perceived as passive by definition, suggesting instead that the ontology be built around leadership outcomes of direction, alignment and commitment (Drath et al., 2008). Rost (2008) also takes issue with the term ‘follower’ as inherently subservient. Like Bennis (2007), he views leadership as a relationship, and would replace the term ‘follower’ with ‘collaborator’.

Even if there are remaining issues with the terms, it seems that the view of leadership as a relationship helps to reduce our emphasis on either the leader or the follower as the primary *source* of leadership. In this approach, leadership may be co-produced by both parties (Shamir, 2007). Leadership outcomes are determined by the nature of the relationship between the leader and follower, and that relationship is determined by characteristics and behaviours of both the leader and the follower.

When we look closely at the leadership literature, there are a number of theories that acknowledge the importance of the relationship between the leader and follower. House (1996) clearly states that path-goal theory is dyadic in that it focuses on relationships between formal leaders and their followers. Hernandez and colleagues (2011) make the case that transformational, charismatic, authentic, and situational leadership theories are also essentially dyadic. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) consider the dyad to be critical in their relationship based perspective of leadership. They divide leadership into three domains: the leader, the follower, and the relationship.

As described earlier, the first domain described by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), the leader, has been well represented in the leadership literature. Most of the work in this area shows the leader as the independent variable and the follower as the dependent variable (Howell & Shamir, 2005; Shamir, 2007).

The follower domain described by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) is focused on the characteristics and behaviours of followers that affect leadership outcomes. This is equivalent to the ‘reversal of the lens’ advocated by Shamir (2007) that looks at how followers impact leaders. In other words, followers act as the independent variable and leader characteristics, attitudes, or behaviours become the dependent variable. There are few examples of this type of work. Interestingly, there were some empirical studies in this vein completed approximately thirty-five years ago, but little since then.

Specifically, Greene (1975) found that follower performance affected leadership styles and Herold (1977) found that follower performance could affect leader behaviour and attitudes. More recently, Dvir and Shamir (2003) found that the initial developmental level of followers predicted the transformational leadership style of both direct and indirect leaders (although in different ways). Others have proposed that follower feedback can affect the development of a leader’s meaning-making system (Valcea, Hamdani, Buckley, & Novicevic, 2011). This followership perspective is concerned with how followers influence leaders, which is in contrast to a follower-centric approach (Meindl, 1995) that looks at how follower characteristics and attitudes influence their perceptions of certain types of leaders (Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010).

The relationship domain suggested by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) is represented by the broad stream of research that explores the impact of LMX levels. The LMX literature will be reviewed in a separate section.

### Conclusion

Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) argue that while all domains are important, the most comprehensive leadership research should focus on multiple domains at the same time. This dissertation not only ‘reverses the lens’, as advocated by Shamir (2007), by making the follower an independent variable and leader behaviours the dependent variables, it includes all three of the domains defined by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995). Specifically, it looks at how the leader characteristic of regulatory focus (leader domain), the sending of messages by followers (follower domain), and the relationship between the leader and

follower (relationship domain) can influence the attention and subsequent decisions of leaders.

## 2.2 Voice

### Definition of Voice

When followers have information that could affect organizational functioning, they face a decision about whether or not to convey the information and consequently pull leader attention. When the information transmission is outside the scope of one's job requirements, the action of bringing forward this message can be considered the extra-role behaviour of voice (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998).

Voice has been defined as “the discretionary provision of information intended to improve organizational functioning to someone inside an organization with the perceived authority to act” (Detert & Burris, 2007, p. 869). It can also be viewed as “making innovative suggestions for change and recommending modifications to standard procedures” (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). This dissertation focuses on the voice messages that followers send to leaders to assist with the implementation of a change initiative. The act of sending messages to leaders is considered voice behaviour.

For many years the voice literature treated silence as merely the absence of voice (Brinsfield, Edwards, & Greenberg, 2009). In an influential paper, Morrison and Milliken (2000) took a unique perspective and addressed why followers choose to remain silent rather than why they do not choose to speak up. They argued that two factors contribute to a climate of silence. First, followers believe that speaking up will have little or no effect. Second, followers suppose that negative outcomes will result from the act of expression. Silence can be a form of communication as loud as voice (Pinder & Harlos, 2001).

“Voice and silence can be defined respectively as the expression/withholding of “ideas, information, opinions, or concerns” (Brinsfield et al., 2009, p. 4). Van Dyne, Ang, and

Botero (2003) argue that the key difference between voice and silence is not the presence or absence of noise, instead it is the follower's motivation to express or withhold. They conceptualize voice and silence as having six potential dimensions in total. These are: prosocial voice and silence, defensive voice and silence, and acquiescent voice and silence.

Prosocial voice has a constructive aspect, it is "speaking out and challenging the status quo with the intent of improving the situation" (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998, p. 853). According to Liang, Farh, and Farh (2012) prosocial voice can have two dimensions. Promotive voice revolves around ways to improve the work situation, whereas prohibitive voice is concerned with issues that could hurt the work situation. To illustrate, a follower who engages in promotive voice may point out an opportunity to increase productivity in the department; a follower who engages in prohibitive voice may speak up about a possible threat to productivity. Both types of voice are designed to encourage positive aspects of the work situation. This dissertation focuses on the promotive and prohibitive types of prosocial voice.

### Outcomes of Voice

Organizational leaders and scholars have shown a great deal of interest in the outcomes of follower voice. Much of the early literature had a theoretical foundation in Hirschman's (1970) work on exit, voice, and loyalty. This theory suggests that when a follower becomes dissatisfied with some aspect of the work experience, he/she has two choices, to either remain loyal or to withdraw (separate from the work environment either physically, emotionally, and/or cognitively). Voice may occur in both situations, but it is considered more likely when employees stay loyal. Those who are the most loyal may be the most effective at voice behaviour.

Much of the earlier empirical work on voice focused on the psychological consequences of voice for individual followers, along with the resulting impact of these states. For example, researchers have found that followers who feel able to voice issues have shown enhanced satisfaction and organizational commitment and lower intent to turnover (Rusbult, Farrell, Rogers, & Mainous, 1988; Taylor, Tracy, Renard, Harrison, & Carroll,

1995; Withey & Cooper, 1989) and lower actual turnover (Spencer, 1986). Followers who are not able to voice issues may not feel in control or valued by the organization (Lind, Kray, & Thompson, 1998; Lind & Tyler, 1988), and they may experience a disconnect between their values and beliefs, resulting in lower levels of satisfaction, organizational commitment, procedural justice perceptions (Greenberg & Folger, 1983) and higher levels of stress and withdrawal (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; L. E. Parker, 1993).

Over time, organizational researchers have moved away from the view of voice as a way to deal with personal dissatisfaction, and now instead view it as a form of prosocial behaviour (Morrison, 2011). In other words, there is more interest in how voice can have a direct impact on the broader organization. Follower communication about problems, ideas, options or concerns are crucial for effective organizational functioning (Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Morrison & Rothman, 2009). Voice can improve organizational performance by generating solutions and opportunities to make the workplace run better (Lind & Kulik, 2009; MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2011). For example, the degree to which followers speak up or not is seen to directly affect organizational learning and knowledge sharing (Ashford et al., 2009; Brinsfield et al., 2009; Milliken & Lam, 2009). If followers do not share what they know with each other and with leaders, then organizational practices cannot evolve and improve. This may be especially important in today's enterprises distinguished by rapid change and escalating complexity (Ashford et al., 2009; Nemeth & Wachter, 1983; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

According to Lind and Kulik (2009) voice opportunities can also lead to negative outcomes. For example, when leaders ask for voice and then fail to act on it, followers can become frustrated and dissatisfied. There are also occasions when followers are punished for raising issues, and these punitive actions can cause even more serious follower reactions. Sometimes followers may be given so much opportunity to express themselves that decisions are delayed. It is also possible that voice can introduce conflict between organizational members.

Milliken, Morrison, and Hewin (2003) found that people worried that speaking up could generate a negative image, leading to a loss of credibility, social rejection, a lack of cooperation from others, and reduced career opportunities. The evidence suggests that at least some of these concerns have merit. A number of recent studies have looked at how voice impacts the leader's perception of the follower. Encompassing a consideration of the effects of the source, the message, and the context, one study found that followers who engage in voice behaviour are likely to be perceived favourably when they are perceived as trustworthy (source), provide solutions (message), and give voice early in the process (context) (Whiting, Maynes, Podsakoff, & Podsakoff, 2012). Burris (2012) found that when followers engaged in challenging voice, this was associated with both lower performance ratings and endorsement of ideas, while supportive voice was connected to an image of promotability and higher endorsement levels. Outcomes for followers may also depend on how well the leader and follower agree about follower voice. Burris, Detert, and Romney (2013) found that followers had positive outcomes when both leaders and followers perceived the follower had high voice levels. However, followers who overestimated their voice levels relative to the leaders' perceptions were rated as worse performers and were more likely to be involuntarily terminated.

### Related Constructs

Morrison (2011) reviews other constructs in the organizational literature that are related to follower voice. For example, voice can be seen as one of several possible prosocial organizational behaviours (Brief & Motowidlo, 1986). The upward communication literature (Athassiades, 1973; Glauser, 1984) is related to voice in that it focuses on information that is passed from followers to leaders. Unlike voice, however, it can include any type of information, including that which would be considered in-role. Whistle-blowing (Miceli & Near, 1992; Miceli, Near, & Dworkin, 2008) involves the transmission of information, like voice, but it is only about improper practices or activities, and is sometimes directed outside of the organization. The issue selling literature (Ashford, Rothbard, Piderit, & Dutton, 1998; Dutton, Ashford, O'Neill, & Lawrence, 2001) looks at how managers try to attract the attention of top leaders about strategic issues. Mechanisms that allow for voice are considered in both the human

resources management and industrial/labour relations literatures (Dundon, Wilkinson, Marchington, & Ackers, 2004; Spencer, 1986; Wood & Wall, 2007).

In addition, there are other related constructs that, like voice, are based on discretionary, extra-role, and constructive follower behaviour. Task revision is defined as “action taken to correct a faulty procedure, an inaccurate job description, or a role expectation that is dysfunctional for an organization” (Staw & Boettger, 1990, p. 534). People have been found to be reticent to participate in task revision, often allowing issues and problems to continue. However, those who feel accountable for the task are more likely to attempt corrections, but only when they feel empowered (Staw & Boettger, 1990). Proactive behaviour is defined as “taking initiative in improving current circumstances or creating new ones; it involves challenging the status quo rather than passively adapting to present conditions” (Crant, 2000, p. 436). However, this can be in- or extra-role behaviour (S. K. Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006). Whether an action is termed proactive will be influenced by the context, because it is dependent upon the usual conditions of the environment (Frese & Fay, 2001). It seems to be accepted that this type of activity by followers is critical to organizations, yet the drivers of this behaviour have received relatively little attention (S. K. Parker et al., 2006).

### The Decision to Voice

Although voice can have many positive outcomes, followers are often reluctant to speak up (Liu, Zhu, & Yang, 2010). As noted above, this may be due to a realistic awareness of the costs that can be incurred. Milliken, Morrison, and Hewlin (2003) developed a model of the process a follower might use when deciding whether to voice information or not. They suggest that followers conduct a cost-benefit analysis, consistent with Vroom’s (1964) expectancy theory. They offer five potential negative/neutral outcomes that followers consider when determining whether or not to send a message to leaders. First, followers may feel that they will be viewed or labeled negatively. This is in line with the attention literature (Ashford et al., 1998; Dutton et al., 1997; Piderit & Ashford, 2003) which suggests that followers consider the effect on their professional reputations when deciding to raise issues with top leaders. Second, followers do not want to damage

relationships or lose social capital. Third, followers may fear retaliation or punishment: leaders or peers may take issue with the message or its sender. Fourth, speaking out may hurt others even though it may help the organization. Fifth, followers may believe that voice may have little or no effect. As suggested by Morrison and Milliken (2000), if there is a sense of futility, followers may develop over time a sense of learned helplessness (Seligman, 1975) leading to low levels of voice. This is reflected in Morrison's (2011) conclusion that the literature has emphasized that voice is dependent on followers' perceptions as to whether there will be negative personal repercussions (perceived safety of voice) and whether it will have an effect (perceived efficacy of voice).

The followers' perceptions of safety and efficacy of voice are likely to be affected by both contextual and personal factors (Morrison, 2011). In this vein, the model provided by Milliken, Morrison, and Hewlin (2003) suggests that followers' assessment of outcomes of voice will be dependent on three factors: (1) individual characteristics; (2) organizational characteristics; and (3) the relationship with the leader.

Individual characteristics focus on differences between people, such as disposition or demographics, and their affect on voice. This is based on the premise that some people are simply more apt to speak up relative to others because of who they are (Detert & Burris, 2007). Voice has been correlated with age (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008b; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998), education (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998), tenure (Burris, Detert, & Chiaburu, 2008; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008b; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998), and ethnicity (Detert & Burris, 2007; LePine & Van Dyne, 1998). Individuals who have high self-esteem (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998), a proactive personality (Crant, 2000), or a higher sense of personal control (Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008b) may be more likely to participate in voice activities. Le Pine and Van Dyne (2001) found connections between voice and the big five personality dimensions (Barrick & Mount, 1991). Specifically, they found conscientiousness and extraversion to be positively correlated to voice behaviour, and neuroticism and agreeableness to be negatively correlated to voice behaviour. Gender has been associated with voice levels (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998); and men have been found to give more suggestions (LePine & Van Dyne, 1998).



Position level has been shown to impact voice (Fuller, Marler, & Hester, 2006; Islam & Zyphur, 2005; Van Dyne & LePine, 1998), likely because people in higher positions may face less risk in speaking up. Similarly, voice has been shown to increase with work flow centrality (Venkataramani & Tangirala, 2010). Stamper and Van Dyne (2001) found that voice was higher when work status matched preferred work status for both full and part-time employees. Power distance, the degree to which followers believe that leaders are entitled to special status and privilege (Hofstede, 1980), has been linked to voice levels in two cultures, and found to interact with the relationship between LMX and voice in one culture (Botero & Van Dyne, 2009). Premeaux and Bedeian (2003) found that low self-monitors spoke up more as self-esteem, internal locus of control, top management openness, and trust in supervisor increased. In her review of the work on follower attitudes and dispositions that affect voice, Morrison (2011) argues that there is a need for a more coherent theoretical framework within which to situate both existing and future empirical work.

Organizational characteristics are aspects of the workplace that can affect whether followers believe voice will be influential and safe. This work is based on the assumption that even followers who have the disposition and attitude to speak loudly will first check the organizational context to see if it is worthwhile and safe to do so (Dutton et al., 1997; Milliken et al., 2003; Morrison & Milliken, 2000; Pinder & Harlos, 2001). When followers feel a high level of psychological safety in the environment, they believe that engaging in risky voice will not result in harm (Edmondson, 1999, 2003). Ashford and colleagues (1998) found that perceptions of high organizational support and a good relationship with decision makers increased follower voice because it enhanced the perceived efficacy of voice and deemphasized its risk. Consistent with a conservation of resources view, followers who experience greater workplace stressors have been found to have lower levels of voice (Ng & Feldman, 2012). Glauser (1984) also looked at how aspects of the organization can affect upward communication. His review suggests that a number of structural factors play a role in information flow, including: physical or structural proximity between sender and receiver (more distance = less interaction); sequential links (the more levels there are in the hierarchy, the more likely information is to become lost and or garbled before reaching the top of the organization); number of

parallel channels (the more routes there are, the greater the odds of information being sent up); organizational level (dyads at higher levels have more frequent exchange of important information); and other facilitating mechanisms (technology, structured communication processes, design).

The follower's relationship with the leader is likely to be a key factor affecting whether followers decide that voice behaviour is worthwhile. Since leaders have power over followers, a resource dependency view (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978) suggests that followers are more apt to participate in voice if leaders indicate they are interested in hearing from followers. Detert and Burris (2007) used this perspective and found evidence to suggest that leader openness predicted follower voice, mediated by psychological safety. This is consistent with the work done by Edmondson (2003) that indicates that followers are more apt to speak up when leaders communicate what is perceived as a sincere invitation for input. The issue selling literature also notes the importance of management openness and relationship quality in the decision of followers to speak up (Ashford et al., 1998). Perceptions of ethical leadership have been shown to influence voice levels through the mediating influence of psychological safety (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). Thus, when leaders act in an ethical manner, followers feel there is less reason to fear adverse consequences to voice behaviour. Trust in the leader has been found to be related to follower voice, but only when followers are empowered by a perception that the leaders want them to speak up (Gao, Janssen, & Shi, 2011). Milliken et al. (2003) found that followers withheld voice due to a concern about the relationship with the leader. Tangirala and Ramanujam (2012) found that when leaders encourage followers to engage in voice, this makes them feel more influential leading to more voice activity, but the relationship is influenced by leader status, work self-efficacy, and job satisfaction. In an investigation of the effect of justice on voice, Takeuchi, Chen and Cheung (2012) found that perceptions of interpersonal justice had a positive relationship with voice. The relationship between the two was weaker when procedural justice was high, although this interaction became weaker when distributive justice was low. Other scholars have found a connection between transformational leadership and higher levels of voice (Liu et al., 2010). Similarly, Cable and Judge (2003) found that type of voice was affected by the leader's management style. The LMX literature suggests that a high quality relationship

between a leader and follower will result in an exchange of information beyond which is called for in the formal job description (Martin et al., 2010). This has found some support (Botero & Van Dyne, 2009). Burris, Detert, and Chiaburu (2008) suggest that this may be because a low level of LMX may indicate that the follower is considering a withdrawal from the organization, leading to a reduction in the follower's desire to invest in discretionary behaviour designed to help the organization. Van Dyne, Kamdar and Joireman (2008) found that the positive relationship between LMX and voice was buffered by followers' job perceptions of whether or not voice was internal or external to the job. There is also evidence that higher level leaders can influence follower voice in more direct ways than previously thought. Detert and Trevino (2010) found that followers did not only consider their direct leader when determining the risk of speaking up, they also considered 'skip leaders', that is, leaders two to five levels above them.

Although it is clear that leaders affect voice, there is a call for more research on exactly what leader behaviours can encourage this activity (Morrison, 2011). Going beyond specific behaviours of the leader, Detert and Edmondson (2011) found that implicit voice theories can explain why a follower speaks up or remains silent. Thus, followers interpret leader actions through the lens of their implicit voice theories. Responding to encouragement for a follower-centric perspective (Shamir, 2007) suggests that followers may be more influenced by their own cognitive preconceptions than the actual behaviours of their leaders.

### Cross-Level View of Voice

Morrison (2011) notes that an exciting recent development in the voice arena has been the emerging cross-level perspective. Rather than focusing only on the individual, there has been some new work on group level effects and how shared beliefs affect voice (Morrison, Wheeler-Smith, & Kamdar, 2011; Tangirala & Ramanujam, 2008a). Morrison (2011) suggests this cross-level perspective will provide important insights and proposes a number of other general areas that are ripe for future research. First, Morrison notes that it is important to focus more on the message type. Thus far, most of the research has used a very general view of voice. She advances the idea that a more

nuanced understanding of voice can be reached if organizational scholars focus on three main types: suggestion-focused (messages about improving something), problem-focused (messages about fixing something harmful), and opinion-focused (messages that are contrary to others' point of view). Message type may also vary in terms positive or negative message valence and urgency.

Second, Morrison (2011) recommends a consideration of the tactics followers use to express their ideas and the choices they make as to the targets of voice. Specifically, we need to understand more about the ways individuals decide to express themselves. She notes that the issue selling literature may be a good starting point for theory building. Dutton et al. (2001) have identified a number of tactics or 'moves' that rely on relational, normative and strategic contextual process knowledge. As for targets, Morrison (2011) indicates that there has not been enough conceptual consideration of the differences between voice that is directed at leaders versus peers. An exception is a study done by Liu et al. (2010) that found that social identification predicted voice towards peers while personal identification predicted voice towards the supervisor.

Third, Morrison (2011) advocates for more work on outcomes to voice, how a voice climate develops at the organizational level (Dutton et al., 2002), and how emotions (e.g. fear) affect voice. Methodologically, she suggests multi-level and multi-perspective work, better measures, and more longitudinal studies.

I suggest that a major gap in the voice literature is a consideration of what happens to voice once it has been transmitted. Although Burriss (2012) found that challenging voice resulted in lower endorsement, research is sparse on what leaders do with specific messages once they have been received. It may be helpful to connect this line of research with the literature on creativity. For example, Baer (2012) looked at how employees were able to get their ideas implemented in the workplace. He reported that implementation was more likely when there were strong 'buy-in' relationships. We need to know more about how follower voice leads to changes in leader cognition and behaviour.

## Conclusion

This dissertation responds to Morrison's (2011) call for a fuller understanding of the impact of different types of messages and the outcomes that follow voice. Specifically, this study looks at how leader regulatory focus (leader characteristic) influences the reception of different types (promotive and prohibitive) of prosocial messages (types of messages) from followers, and the attention and resulting decisions that follow (outcomes). Going beyond the work that has investigated the targets of voice (Liu et al., 2010), this dissertation will consider the impact of the source of voice by examining how leaders process a message relative to the quality of the relationship (LMX) he/she has with the sender.

## 2.3 Attention

Organizational theorists have long noted the importance of attention. Ocasio (2011, p. 1288) reviews some work from the mid-twentieth century by Simon and March (March & Simon, 1958; Simon, 1947) that uses attention as a critical organizing construct. March continued to give attention an important role in his work on decision making (March, 1988; March & Olsen, 1976) and risk preferences (March & Shapira, 1987, 1992). Weick (1979) also considered attention an important determinant of organizational behaviour that unfolds within an incredibly complex context (Daft & Weick, 1984).

Organizations have been described as a "cacophony of complementary and competing change attempts, with managers at all levels joining the fray and pushing for issues of particular importance to themselves" (Dutton et al., 2001, p. 716). Managers are not able to attend equally to all of the noise that emanates from so many sources. Attention is a limited resource and represents an important investment by the organization (Dutton & Webster, 1988) and by the individual. No leader has sufficient attention for all of the data that are present in the environment. "Given that decision makers have only a limited supply of time, energy, and money, interest can only be allocated across a finite issue set"

(Dutton & Webster, 1988, p. 663). Most leaders do not have the ability to detect, interpret, and act on the large amount of valuable but weak or ambiguous messages that are sent to them (Day & Schoemaker, 2006; Dutton & Jackson, 1987).

### Varieties of Attention

In his review of the attention literature, Ocasio (2011) notes that the topic has been addressed in a number of ways. To reduce ambiguity, he offers a framework based on whether the research focus is structure, process, or outcomes. To distinguish between types of attention, he classifies them into three types: attentional perspective, attentional engagement, and attentional selection.

Attentional perspective is made up of the top-down structures that direct focus over time. This type of attention is akin to the dominant high-level strategy of a firm, and affects both automatic and purposeful information processing. Ocasio (2011) notes that more than one attentional perspective may influence a person or an organization at any one time. The predominant measure in the attention literature is letters to shareholders which is reflective of the attentional perspective (Ocasio, 2011). Attentional engagement “is defined as the process of intentional, sustained allocation of cognitive resources to guide problem solving, planning, sensemaking, and decision-making” (Ocasio, 2011, p. 1288). This type of attention directs focus to a specific set of stimuli and possible responses (Ocasio, 1997). At the individual level, it is equivalent to executive attention, but it also can describe an organization level vigilance or focus over time. Attentional selection is the outcome of attentional processes that result in focus on some stimuli and the neglect of others. This can be affected by both top-down and bottom-up processes. This dissertation focuses on attentional engagement.

Ocasio (2011) identifies a number of metatheories that have been used to interpret these varieties of attention. These include: issue selling (Dutton & Ashford, 1993; Dutton & Webster, 1988) which focuses on the attention of senior managers to threats and opportunities; and the attention-based view (ABV) of the firm (Ocasio, 1997) which aims to combine a number of perspectives.

## Issue Selling

According to organizational theorists, the first step in the process of organizational decision-making is the naming of an issue. Someone, somewhere in the organization, has to initially identify an issue as such. Dutton and Ashford (1993) argue that issues are not inherently strategic, they become so when they are identified as such by managers. They use Ansoff's (1980) definition of a strategic issue as events, developments or trends that can affect organizational performance. In their seminal article on issue selling, they focus on how issues are first identified and diagnosed (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). They suggest that middle managers can have a significant impact on what is salient to top managers. Middle managers sell issues by influencing how top managers notice and understand them by "providing or concealing important information about issues, by framing the issues in particular ways, and by mobilizing resources and routines that direct top managers' attention to some issues and not others" (Dutton & Ashford, 1993, p. 398). Issue selling is presented as a critical step in the initial phase of an organization's decision-making process. It is where issue recognition and diagnosis truly begins.

Dutton and Ashford (1993) built an issue selling framework by drawing on three different theoretical perspectives: upward influence (Smith, 1982), social problem theory (Schneider, 1985), and impression management (Schenkler, 1980). The upward influence research considers the influence of the characteristics of the message sender and receiver, and how both are influenced by the organizational context. Social problem theory helps to explain how the labeling of issues affects their perceived legitimacy. The impression management lens suggests two risks associated with selling an issue. First, the seller might personally become associated with something negative. Second, the outcomes of the issue may harm the seller's credibility as it relates to future selling attempts. This is consistent with research on employee voice that has established a connection between follower voice behaviour and the leader's subsequent perception of the follower's image and performance level (Burriss, 2012; Burriss et al., 2013; Milliken et al., 2003).

Dutton and Ashford (1993) review literature that shows issue selling can have significance from an instrumental and symbolic logic on both the individual and organizational levels. The input of middle managers in the issue interpretation process is considered advantageous because they are closer to the realities of operations (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). The involvement of middle managers in the issue selling process can lead to better decisions, clear signaling of organizational priorities and interests, individual career progression, and clarity on the degree of congruence between the person and the organization. This seems akin to the process and positive organizational outcomes that have been connected to high levels of employee voice, although in that literature the message sender is usually not of managerial rank.

The initiation of issue selling is more likely when the seller perceives the potential for success is high or when the issue is so personally important that the potential outcome is worth the extra effort (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). In other words, a person may attempt to sell an issue if the cost-benefit analysis suggests that the potential payoff exceeds the potential risk. This is consistent with expectancy theory (Vroom, 1964). The estimation of probability of success is proposed to be influenced by a number of factors. The structural location of the seller is critical. If the issue is directly connected to the seller's function, then there is more information available to the seller and issue selling will be more likely. In contrast, raising issues from outside functional areas may not be considered a legitimate practice by others, thus increasing the possibility of damage to the seller's reputation – an undesired outcome. The seller's perceived power and credibility may also affect a person's willingness to promote an issue. In addition, when an issue carries less performance risk, it is more apt to be raised. Perceptions of risk can also decrease when top management is seen as supportive and open.

One factor that may affect the salience of issues to leaders is the label that is attached to it (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995). Issues are often categorized as threats or opportunities. Threats involve potential loss with relatively little control over outcomes. Opportunities are characterized by possible gains and a higher amount of control (Chattopadhyay, Glick, & Huber, 2001; Dutton & Jackson, 1987; Jackson & Dutton, 1988). Both



categories are associated with urgency, challenge, and important outcomes (Chattopadhyay et al., 2001).

Organizational members who have early exposure to issues can affect eventual organizational response through the labeling process (Dutton & Jackson, 1987). Once an issue is categorized as a threat or an opportunity, it may be viewed differently by different people. The presentation of an issue may be distorted in order to maximize gains and avoid losses for the sender (O'Reilly, 1983). In other words, the way in which information is transmitted to others can result in either positive or negative consequences for the sender.

There are two main indicators that issue selling has been successful, as proposed by Dutton and Ashford (1993). The first is the level of time and attention that management gives to the issue. The second indicator is the change to the issue seller's credibility. Sellers want to find a committed buyer, but not if their reputation is ruined in the process. This can be a tough balancing act. Little empirical work has been done on issue selling, but there have been suggestions that this area deserves more careful attention (Brinsfield et al., 2009).

Interestingly, this literature gives little consideration to what happens after an issue has received attention. For example, it is unclear if attention will always result in the allocation of additional resources or if there is a correlation between attention quality and subsequent action. I suggest that this is a serious gap. The after-effects of attention may be important information in our quest to understand the construct of attention. In addition, practically speaking, it seems as though it would be very interesting for leaders to know how attention affects action in the workplace.

#### Attention-based View of the Firm

It may be that where leaders direct their attention determines everything that happens in an organization. Ocasio (1997) presents an attention-based view (ABV) of the firm that argues that organizational behaviour is the result of how organizations channel the attention of their decision makers. This metatheory of organizational adaptation is

informed by Simon's (1947) concept of bounded rationality. Rationality is limited due to the insufficient capacity of individuals to attend to all messages and to the inefficiency of the organizational structure to direct the attention of decision makers to the most relevant data. Within ABV, attention has been defined as:

“The noticing, encoding, interpreting, and focusing of time and effort by organizational decision-makers on both (a) *issues*: the available repertoire of categories for making sense of the environment: opportunities, and threats; and (b) *answers*: the available repertoire of action alternatives: proposals, routines, projects, programs, and procedures” (Ocasio, 1997, p. 189).

The three foundational premises of Ocasio's (1997) ABV of the firm are focus, situated attention, and structural distribution. The principle of focus indicates that people will make choices about where to place their attention, and what they select affects what they will do. A few select items will monopolize consciousness, while other items are ignored. The principle of situated attention suggests that the attention and action of a decision maker is influenced by the context. There is some evidence to support this principle, for example, there are studies that show that the amount of litter present in an environment can directly influence whether or not a person litters (Cialdini, Kallgren, & Reno, 1991; Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990). Another example is a study that highlighted the effect deregulation had on the attention of airline industry leaders (Cho & Hambrick, 2006). Finally, the structural distribution of attention principle specifies that organizational procedures, rules, communications, and policies serve to channel attention in particular directions.

#### Follower Effect on Leader Attention

Ocasio (1997)'s attention-based view of the firm seems to recognize that attention is not the sole domain of senior managers, however most of the attention literature focuses only on leaders at the highest level (Daft & Weick, 1984; Day & Schoemaker, 2006) and mostly on issues external to the organization (Chattopadhyay et al., 2001; Thomas, Clark, & Gioia, 1993). Senior managers are the ones who are seen to be interacting with the

environment, scanning for issues, interpreting what the data means, and responding accordingly (Daft & Weick, 1984; Thomas et al., 1993).

However, strategic information does not only come from the external environment (Thomas et al., 1993), nor are managers the only ones who are exposed to plentiful information. Organizational members below the senior management team interact with the internal and external environments, and they also have access to critical knowledge. However, little consideration is given to how internal issues become salient through lower-level employees of the organization (Rerup & Salvato, 2010).

There is evidence that employees at all levels of the organization may possess information that is important for organizational functioning (Rerup, 2010). It is often true that leaders have a unique perspective in that they have a broad view that aids in interpretation of issues. However, the information they use to develop this view may not solely come from direct exposure, but also from the information that is relayed to them from others (Rerup & Salvato, 2010).

People at other places in the hierarchy of the organization can offer potential routes within which to channel attention. In fact, some view a typical organization as a “marketplace of ideas in which issues are “sold” via the persuasive efforts of managers and “bought” by top managers who set the firm’s strategic direction” (Dutton et al., 2001, p. 716). Within the context of numerous ‘pitches’, leaders decide (subconsciously at times) which signals are important and which are not (Dutton & Webster, 1988).

In many cases, followers are the first to unearth data. Often people in the lower end of the hierarchy have the most knowledge about technology implementation, customers, changes in markets and organizational performance (W. L. Gardner et al., 2005, p. 368). Optimal decision-making requires comprehensive data. If top leaders are the only ones scanning the environment, only a narrow perspective will be achieved (Sutcliffe, 1994). Yet there is a paucity of research on how issues flow upwards to decision-makers, and how leaders then respond.

### Individual Level Attention

In contrast to the higher level view of attention taken by organizational scholars, cognitive scientists have looked closely at attention at the level of the individual (Posner, 2004). At the broadest level, human behaviour can be seen as a result of the interaction between stimuli and an individual's goals (Pashler, Johnston, & Ruthruff, 2001). To understand any type of behaviour, it may be important to understand the principles behind the influence of these bottom-up (stimuli) and top-down (goals) forces and how these systems interact and compete (Pashler et al., 2001). The study of attention at the individual level helps to integrate psychology with neuroscience (Raz & Buhle, 2006).

The human brain is not a passive 'switchboard' that attends to each message in turn, instead it is a complex information processing system (Broadbent, 1958). The processing limitations of the brain have resulted in the evolution of mechanisms of selection that help us determine the aspects of the environment that should be noticed and analyzed and which should be ignored (Parasuraman, Warm, & See, 1998). It is important to understand the biases or mechanisms that lead us to prioritize certain information over others (Fox et al., 2011).

Posner (1980) distinguished between exogenous and endogenous attention control. Exogenous control is reflexive, and stimuli-dependent, while endogenous control is voluntary, and cognitively-driven. Most cognitive psychology research on attention has focused on exogenous or reflexive control of attention. This may be due to a methodological consideration in that there is a higher level of ease in experimentally manipulating the nature and timing of stimuli (Pashler et al., 2001).

Cognitive scientists agree that attention involves more than one type of action. A critical early model fragments attention into three components: alerting, orienting, and executive control (Posner & Boies, 1971). While the model has been refined, much of the original conceptualization has stood the test of time.

Alerting is defined as "the ability to increase and maintain response readiness in preparation for an impending stimulus" (Raz & Buhle, 2006, p. 371). This task-specific

alertness is the foundation for the other components of orienting and executive control (Parasuraman et al., 1998). Alerting differs from arousal in terms of specificity, with arousal being more general (Sturm & Willmes, 2001). Orienting is “the ability to select specific information from among multiple sensory stimuli (sometimes known as scanning or selection), and is the most studied attentional network” (Raz & Buhle, 2006, p. 372) by cognitive scientists. Executive control involves conflicts between different stimuli and is used in planning, decision-making, and regulation of thoughts and feelings (Posner, 2004; Raz & Buhle, 2006). In his review of the cognitive science literature on attention, Ocasio (2011) describes it as the type of attention that “enables individuals to process multiple goals quasi-simultaneously by switching back and forth between different stimuli, including directly observed stimuli and stimuli stored in memory, and bringing them together in working memory” (p. 1287).

Recent technological advances have opened the door to the study of attention processes at the neurosystems level (Posner & Rothbart, 2000). The three aspects of attention (alerting, orienting, and executive control) have been shown to be linked to separate brain regions (Fan, McCandliss, Fossella, Flombaum, & Posner, 2005). In other words, each component of attention is attached to discrete anatomical networks that work closely together (Raz & Buhle, 2006).

### Leader Decision-Making

Leaders are inundated with more messages than they can process, so they must make a decision on which messages should be attended and which should be ignored. Leaders must then determine which information or advice from followers should be taken. Bonaccio and Dalal (2006) discuss the central findings from this body of research. Decision-makers take advice in order to improve the accuracy of the decision and to share accountability. However, people often ‘discount’ the information they receive, weighting their own personal recommendations more heavily than they should. This egocentric advice discounting is reduced when the advice is offered by someone with relevant experience, expertise, or a history of giving good advice. Discounting can also be affected by rewards, but surprisingly, also when payment is made to the person

suggesting advice. Goal congruence is also important. People will likely discount advice given by an advisor who is rewarded when the listener performs poorly. In sum, people are more apt to utilize advice when the benefits of doing so outweigh the costs. Taking advice does seem to improve decision accuracy (P. H. Gardner & Berry, 1995; Sniezek, Schrah, & Dalal, 2004).

Bonaccio and Dalal (2006) acknowledge the social context of decision-making by noting that decisions are often made by individuals who have been influenced by someone else. However, they report that in a prototypical study in this area, participants who are unknown to each other are randomly assigned to either the decision-maker or the advisor role. The decision-maker has the responsibility to make a decision after hearing a recommendation from the advisor. They call for more research into the effects of interpersonal relationships between decision-maker and advisor (Bonaccio & Dalal, 2006). Prior interaction between the decision-maker and advisor could determine how advice is received. Although to extend their reasoning, it seems likely that prior interaction could also affect the advice that is given, along with the manner of presentation by the advisor.

Communication scholars Goldsmith and Fitch (1997) look beyond advice as informational guidance, and consider the possibility that advice might be offered or appreciated for support value. Specifically, the offering of advice may be a message in and of itself, in that it can convey a degree of concern or assurance that the problem is manageable. This psychosocial reinforcement can be a meaningful and valuable component of the message. Although sometimes positive, advice can also be construed as intrusive and critical. Another component that is independent of the informational helpfulness of advice is the reputational concerns of the decision-maker. Taking advice can signal incompetence, but rejecting advice may be considered impolite or insulting. Looking at relationships outside of the workplace, they found that advice from close relational partners was received as appropriate more often than advice from those who were less close. They conclude that advice recipients may feel pressure to follow advice in order to not seem disrespectful or ungrateful to the advisor, thus preserving the relationship.

## Conclusion

While the attention literature looks at how managers bring issues to the top management team, it does not include a full consideration of how less senior organization members bring issues to the attention of management. I suggest this is a critical gap. Followers often have the most intimate knowledge of what is happening at certain levels within the organization, but generally leaders will notice and spend time considering only a subset of the issues that are voiced by followers. The issues that ultimately receive attention can affect important organizational outcomes. Rerup (2010) offers an interesting examination of how weak signals can stagnate in the lower levels of an organization. He found that issues that were salient to lower-level employees were not consistently attended to by more senior leaders, even though efforts were made to gain their attention. Leaders are bombarded by so many signals, that they are not always adept at receiving the messages sent by followers.

In the management literature, most of the theory and research has looked at top-down processes that affect attention at the organizational level (Ocasio, 2011). Cognitive psychologists have focused more on bottom-up processes that affect attention at the individual level. Ocasio (2011) argues that the cognitive psychology literature implies that research on attention in organizations “should account both for top-down and bottom-up attentional processes and their interrelationships”(p. 1288). Ocasio (2011) notes that there are few studies that consider the interaction between top-down and bottom-up processes, with exceptions including recent work on institutional logics (Nigam & Ocasio, 2010), attention quality (Weick & Sutcliffe, 2006), and attentional triangulation (Rerup, 2009).

This dissertation will take an approach to the study of attention that goes beyond the predominantly bottom-up, laboratory-based, individual level work of cognitive psychology and the top-down, mainly theoretical, macro focus of the organizational science literature. My approach is unique in that it empirically explores how different types of voice from a follower influences the attention of the leader (bottom-up process), and how the regulatory focus of the leader (top-down influence) and the connection

between the leader and follower (mid-level influence) change this relationship. In addition, this dissertation goes past an assessment of attention to explore how attention affects subsequent decision-making. While most studies ignore the possible effect of the personal relationship between the message sender and message receiver, this study incorporates the dyadic relationship between leader and follower as an important moderating variable.

## 2.4 Leader-Member Exchange

Distinct from other leadership theories, LMX focuses on the dyadic relationship between a leader and a follower. Developed by Graen (1976) and expanded by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), LMX theory states that leaders can have a unique relationship with each follower, with some relationships being of high quality and others being of low quality. A low quality LMX relationship revolves around the formal contractual obligations inherent in the work context, and can be considered “transactional and impersonal” (Furst & Cable, 2008, p. 454). A high quality LMX relationship, in contrast, includes not only work obligations, but also a social component.

The personal aspect of the high quality LMX relationship is characterized by respect, and a mutual trust and obligation that can affect the type and extent of resources exchanged (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). However, there has been some disagreement over the components that comprise a LMX relationship, with researchers independently developing unique descriptors. It has been defined in terms of loyalty, affect, and contributions (Dienesch & Liden, 1986); loyalty, support, autonomy, and influence (Basu & Green, 1997); influence, trust and respect (H. J. Klein & Kim, 1998), and loyalty, affect, and perceived contribution (Schriesheim, Neider, & Scandura, 1998). In their review of the multiple ways LMX has been conceptualized, Schriesheim, Castro, and Cogliser (1999) note six subdomains that appear in a number of studies: trust, liking, latitude, attention, mutual support, and loyalty.



Graen and Scandura (1987) suggest that LMX has two higher-order factors. One relates to the attitudinal components of the relationship between leader and follower, such as mutual trust and obligation. The other factor relates to the behavioural aspects such as delegation and decision influence.

LMX theory contrasts with traditional leadership approaches that consider only an aggregate view of followers' responses to leader behaviour. The argument of the originators of this theory, according to Henderson et al. (2009), is that the differences between followers' perceptions of the leader should not be taken as measurement error. These differences, in fact, reflect variation in the quality of the relationships between each follower and the leader.

This approach provides a focus on “ the *reciprocal relationships* between leaders and followers” (Dvir & Shamir, 2003, p. 328). In their analysis of the attention the leadership literature has paid to the role of followers, Howell and Shamir (2005) note that the LMX construct is exceptional in terms of the central role of the follower. LMX theory “acknowledges the importance of the role of followers in leadership processes, and it emphasizes that both leader and follower mutually determine the quality of the relationship” (Howell & Shamir, 2005, p. 98).

LMX has been studied in a number of ways. Follower characteristics, such as competence, personality, locus of control, and affect, and leader characteristics like personality, leadership style, and expectations have been correlated with LMX levels (Dulebohn, Bommer, Liden, Brouer, & Ferris, 2011). A number of outcomes have been investigated also, including job satisfaction, job performance, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviour (OCB), turnover, turnover intent, role ambiguity, role conflict, pay satisfaction, procedural and distributive justice, job enrichment, psychological empowerment, and perceptions of politics (Dulebohn et al., 2011; Gerstner & Day, 1997; Ilies et al., 2007; Lapierre & Hackett, 2007; Lapierre, Hackett, & Taggar, 2006).

### Theoretical Foundation

LMX was originally based in role theory (Graen, 1976) but has come to rely heavily on social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1976; Thibault & Kelley, 1959) which is connected to the idea of reciprocity and negotiated transactions (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005; Gouldner, 1960). Social exchange theory (Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1976; Homans, 1961; Thibault & Kelley, 1959) suggests that the informal agreements within a relationship can affect behaviour. A close relationship between two people can lead one of the members to take action to benefit the other, even if this is beyond the scope of the contractual employment agreement that may be in place. In a high quality LMX relationship, the exchange of material and non-material resources extend beyond what is specified in the formal job description (Liden & Graen, 1980; Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997), and may include information, influence, desired tasks, emotional and other support, attention, commitment, loyalty and citizenship behaviour (Martin et al., 2010). In high quality LMX relationships, exchange obligations are often not directly specified and favours are usually repaid in currency different from the original purchase. For example, followers may sometimes fulfill their reciprocity obligations by participating in extra-role behaviour that benefits the organization (Lapierre, 2007). A positive relationship has been found between OCB and LMX levels (Ilies et al., 2007).

Both the leader and the follower are expected to contribute to the exchange, but there has been some concern that the interdependencies between the two are not fully understood. Rousseau (1998) suggests that not enough attention has been paid to the exchange processes that take place, describing the area as a black box. Schriesheim, Castro, and Cogliser's (1999) review of this literature calls for a more in-depth theoretical development of this construct. They note that there have been very few major theoretical papers on this topic, and more are needed to guide empirical work.

### Work Relationships in General

Until recently work relationships have not received a lot of attention. There seemed to be an assumption that humans lost their strong social drive when placed in an economic context. But there is a growing awareness of the importance of social connections in the

workplace. As social beings, relationships are important to us emotionally and physically. Granovetter (1985, p. 278) argues that “most behavior is closely embedded in networks of interpersonal relations.” He asserts that economic action is only a special category of social action. There is evidence that relationships “are people’s most frequent source of both happiness and distress” (Berscheid & Reis, 1998, p. 243). The walls around an organization do not seem to change this fundamental principle.

Organizational scholars have begun to explore the important social action that affects all aspects of the work environment. For example, social network research has helped map the intricacies of the myriad connections that exist in the organization. Of course, social network ties are not always relationships, which connote influence (Berscheid & Reis, 1998). But when there is a relationship, we do not know enough about how these work.

The LMX literature is based on a consideration of the relationship between the leader and follower. Unfortunately, the LMX literature has not devoted much attention to the processes and mechanisms that are inherent to relationships. Since the focus has been only on the relationship between a leader and follower, role biases seem to have crept into the conceptualization of the interactions. For example, there seems to be leader-centric focus in terms of resource exchange. Likely due to the power differential, followers are portrayed as dependent (Snodgrass, Hecht, & Ploutz-Snyder, 1998). Leaders are seen as giving tangible support to followers, while followers passively respond. The LMX literature might benefit from a broader consideration of relationships in general. To understand how the relationship between a leader and follower might affect work outcomes, it is important to understand how relationships work in and of themselves.

Social psychological research on relationships is expansive, however the traditional focus has been on dating and marital unions (Berscheid & Reis, 1998). Platonic, non-familial relationships have received less notice, probably because they are considered less important, and more difficult to study (Berscheid & Reis, 1998).

Recently Dutton and Heaphy (2003) have broached the issue of work relationships in a manner that may inform the LMX literature. Like LMX scholars, Dutton and Heaphy (2003) acknowledge the importance of the social exchange perspective on relationships.

However, they also consider a number of other theoretical lines that help to explain the importance of strong work relationships. These are the lenses of identity, growth and development, and learning. The identity perspective suggests that relationships with other people help in the social construction of personal identity. In other words, we figure out who we are by reading the reflections we see in the eyes of others. Being around trusted others allows us “to explore alternate identities, to make claims, and to craft an identity that a person feels is worthwhile and that fits who employees are or who they wish to become” (Dutton & Heaphy, 2003, p. 270) The growth and development lens is based on the idea that people need connections with other people in order to be healthy and to move forward. Human social attachments are driven by a need to interact, and they provide the basis for ongoing caregiving and development. The learning perspective suggests that relationships are important because interactions not only provide a context for knowledge transfer, they also provide a safe and fertile field upon which knowledge can be developed. These lenses offer suggestions on interesting new directions for future research on LMX or new ways in which past research could be interpreted.

Dutton and Heaphy (2003) have also provided a structure to define relationship quality. According to their framework, a strong relationship will have three components: high emotional carrying capacity, great tensility, and a high degree of connectivity. Emotional carrying capacity is an indicator of how much and the kinds of emotions that can be expressed between the parties. Tensility indicates the ability of the relationship to withstand conflict and tensions without breaking. Connectivity is a measure of the openness of the parties to new ideas and influences. If this definition is applied to the terms of the relationship between a leader and follower, a high LMX relationship will mean that the leader and follower will be more able to express positive and negative information to each other; the relationship will be better able to withstand upsets without fracture; and there will be more expansive room for creativity and new ideas. This broader conceptualization is less role-bound, and may provide more precise direction for researchers.

The importance of a context in which people have more freedom to push boundaries is highlighted in the conflict literature. When followers engage in task conflict, as opposed to relationship and process conflict, group outcomes can improve (de Wit, Greer, & Jehn, 2012). There is evidence that strong personal relationships make people more effective at dealing with task conflict in the workplace (P. P. Shah & Jehn, 1993). In their study of top management teams, Simons and Peterson (2000) found that trust was critical to gaining the benefits of task conflict while mitigating the costs of relationship conflict. This may be because individuals often misconstrue the real reasons behind task issues, often interpreting ambiguous actions to fit expectations (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). When trust is low, behaviours by others are more likely to be interpreted as personal attacks or slights. The LMX literature may benefit from a consideration of these related approaches.

### Conclusion

The work being done on LMX is important because it shines a rare spotlight on work relationships. The relationship between the leader and the follower is clearly a worthy area of study. However, there may be a benefit in looking to other perspectives to further our understanding of how relationships work. There are indications that a broader view is needed.

As a case in point, the LMX literature talks about the reciprocal nature of the relationship, but it does not provide a full consideration of the effects of the relationship on both leaders and followers. Instead, most work in this area has taken a top-down view and focused on how LMX levels affect follower attitudes and behaviours. For example, the quality of the LMX relationship has been found to correlate with follower job performance, follower satisfaction with supervision, follower overall satisfaction, follower commitment, follower role conflict, follower role clarity, follower competence, and follower turnover intentions (Gerstner & Day, 1997). Much less is known about how LMX levels affect leader attitudes and behaviour. This is an important gap in this literature. There is evidence that a high quality LMX relationship is characterized by a greater degree of emotional support, loyalty, commitment and trust (Cropanzano &

Mitchell, 2005; Liden, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2000; Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003). Past studies have looked at how these features influence followers. But it may be reasonable to expect that these characteristics of the relationship (or others) are also salient for leaders on some level and may influence their thoughts and actions. When a leader has a particular connection with a follower, that connection is likely to drive that leader to respond in a certain way to stimuli that stems from that follower.

This dissertation will investigate how LMX levels affect leader attention and decision-making in response to messages from followers.

## 2.5 Regulatory Fit and Focus

Regulatory Fit Theory (Higgins, 2000, 2005) looks at how the motivational orientation of individuals affects the manner in which goals are pursued. The motivational orientation leads to preferences for means (or actions) that sustain the orientation throughout goal pursuit, eventually influencing the individuals' perceptions of the quality of the experience. When a person acts in accordance with his or her preferred means, regulatory fit is achieved, resulting in the perception of 'feeling right' about the actions, along with a higher level of engagement in the activity (Camacho, Higgins, & Luger, 2003; Cesario, Grant, & Higgins, 2004). In other words, people gain value from pursuing their goals in a specific manner, and this value is independent of goal outcomes.

Individuals who are able to behave in a way that is consistent with their orientation will be more engaged and motivated, and they will feel more satisfied about the process and the outcomes.

Regulatory Fit Theory applies to any preferred means of goal pursuit, however, it is most commonly tested via regulatory focus theory (Higgins, 1997, 1998). This theory is concerned with the manner in which people approach pleasure and avoid pain, independent of the general hedonic principles which are the basis of many motivational theories. It is based on self-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) which suggests that people differ in how they reduce discrepancies between their current state and either their

‘ideal’ state or the state they ‘ought’ to be in. Self-regulation is considered to be motivationally distinct when an individual is pursuing either the ‘ideal’ or the ‘ought’ state, and it refers to the process by which people try to align their behaviours and self-conceptions with appropriate goals (Brockner & Higgins, 2001).

Higgins (1997) extended self-discrepancy concepts by proposing Regulatory Focus Theory. This theory suggests that there are two self-regulatory modes – promotion and prevention, along with two goal-pursuit strategic means – eagerness and vigilance. Ideal state and ought state are connected to promotion and prevention foci, respectively (Higgins, 1998). A person with a promotion focus acts in an eager manner, and is concerned with advancement and growth (e.g. movement towards an ideal self) and attaining positive outcomes. A person with a prevention focus is vigilantly engaged with safety and security (e.g. movement towards an ought self) and preventing loss (Cesario, Higgins, & Scholer, 2008; Higgins, 1997, 1998). Although both preferences can co-exist, people have been shown to have a chronic preference for one regulatory focus or the other. In addition, situational features can prime the non-preferred mode (Cesario et al., 2008; Neubert, Kacmar, Carlson, Chonko, & Roberts, 2008).

Some scholars have suggested that a promotion focus is based on a motivation for change, while a desire for stability underlies a prevention focus (Kark & Van Dijk, 2007). The purpose of a promotion focus is seen as progression, exploration and change; while a prevention focus assures safety and security.

While a person’s chronic regulatory focus would be considered stable over time (Brockner & Higgins, 2001; Higgins, 2000), situational regulatory focus may change due to work demands, leadership requests, or the general work climate (Wallace & Chen, 2006). Congruence between chronic and situational focus has been linked to better performance (J. Shah, Higgins, & Friedman, 1998).

While organizational scholars have used regulatory focus theory to study goal attainment, decision making, and creativity, amongst other outcomes, little work has connected regulatory focus theory to the leadership literature. An exception is a conceptual framework developed by Kark and Van Dijk (2007). Their model proposes that the

leader's chronic regulatory focus will predict leader behaviour, mediated by motivation to lead. They propose that leader behaviour will prime the follower's situational regulatory focus, affecting the follower's cognitive strategies, emotions, and task behaviour (moderated by the followers' chronic regulatory focus). Another rare example of consideration of regulatory focus in the leadership literature is an empirical study that found that followers' regulatory focus mediated the influence of leadership style on employee behaviour (Neubert et al., 2008).

Regulatory fit theory can help our understanding of the appeal of a persuasive message. There is evidence that framing an argument to fit the orientation of the message recipient can affect the reception of the message. Specifically, some studies have found that growth-based arguments had the greatest influence on promotion-focused listeners, while vigilance-framed arguments had the greatest effect on prevention-focused recipients (Cesario et al., 2004; Lee & Aaker, 2004). Participants who experienced fit had more positive attitudes towards the message and stronger intentions to comply with inherent recommendations (Cesario & Higgins, 2008), mediated by the experience of 'feeling right'. In addition to 'feeling right' in general, another mechanism in this fit effect is the higher strength of engagement which can make the message easier to process (Cesario et al., 2008). Increased strength of engagement is associated with commitment to a goal, even when faced with obstacles (Freitas & Higgins, 2002; Higgins, 2006).

Higgins (2000) provides an overview of some of the work in this area. He describes a number of studies that support the proposition that motivation of the actor during goal pursuit will be higher when regulatory fit has been achieved (e.g. (Crowe & Higgins, 1997). He notes, however, that regulatory fit does not always predict better performance outcomes. Fit can heighten performance biases (promotion orientation = risk bias; prevention orientation = conservative bias) that can detract from performance. Thus, the value of the fit is independent of the value from outcomes.

### Conclusion

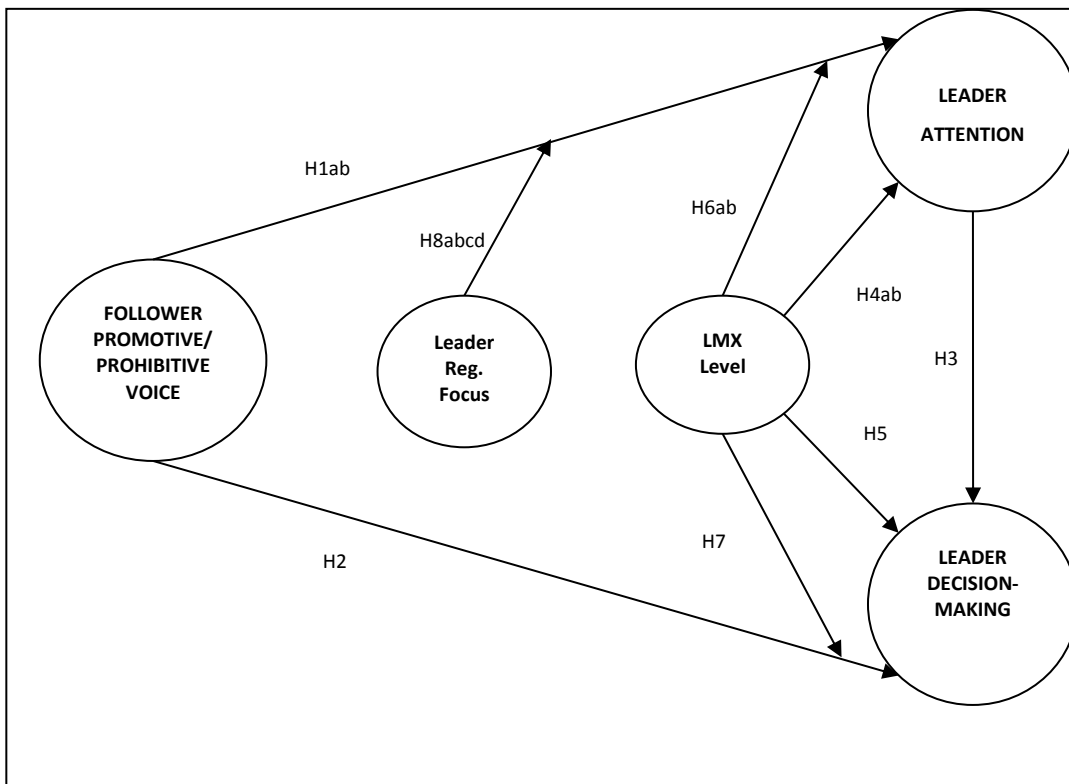
This dissertation may be the only study that empirically tests how regulatory focus influences leadership, specifically in the area of leader attention and decision-making. It



will help to determine if congruence between regulatory focus and message is one of the mechanisms that affect the efficacy of message transfer between followers and leaders and the subsequent outcomes that stem from the message.

## 2.6 Hypotheses Development

Following the literature review and construct definition, this section presents the hypothesized relationships between variables in the model (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1: An Illustration of the Hypothesized Relationships**

### 2.6.1 Follower Voice and Leader Attention and Decision-making

For followers, the act of voicing issues may be satisfying in and of itself, however, the usual motivation is to gain the attention of others, especially organizational leaders (Milliken et al., 2003). Followers are often in an ideal position to gain the attention of leaders due to their knowledge of the work situation (Axtell et al., 2000).

Howell and Shamir (2005) note that followers hold information and expertise needed by the leader. Followers are also seen as a main source of feedback, providing validation of the actions of the leader (Howell & Shamir, 2005). This suggests that listening and acting on messages from followers can empower the leader and influence his/her behaviour. In this manner, leadership outcomes are 'co-produced' (Shamir, 2007).

Attention and response to an issue may differ according to whether it is categorized and labeled as a threat or as an opportunity (Thomas et al., 1993). There is evidence that, in general, managers may be particularly sensitive to threats compared to opportunities. Jackson and Dutton (1988) found that managers were more likely to see a threat when information was ambiguous. When blame is a possible outcome, an issue will likely receive more attention (Tetlock, 1985). This is consistent with prospect theory -- which predicts that people prefer to avoid loss more than they prefer to gain (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981). That is, if a choice is presented as an option to avoid loss, larger amounts will be risked as compared to a choice framed to focus on the potential gain.

Thus, I expect that leaders are more likely to pay attention to prohibitive voice since it describes a threat compared to promotive voice that describes an opportunity. They are also more likely to make decisions that address issues raised in prohibitive voice relative to those raised in promotive voice. Attention will be operationalized in two ways, as (1) time spent looking at a message and (2) amount of interest indicated in a message.

*Hypothesis 1: Leaders will spend more time looking at (Hypothesis 1a) and indicate more interest in (Hypothesis 1b) prohibitive voice messages compared to promotive voice messages.*

*Hypothesis 2: Follower prohibitive voice will more strongly influence leader decisions than promotive voice.*

Ocasio's (1997) attention based view of the firm suggests that the issues that attract leader attention are the issues that determine the behaviour of the organization. According to this theory, leaders choose to place their attention on a subset of possible issues. The items that are consciously considered will direct subsequent action. Those items that do not receive attention will be ignored (i.e. not acted upon). Leaders are asked to collect data from the environment, develop or accept an interpretation, and respond appropriately (Daft & Weick, 1984).

*Hypothesis 3: Attention, in terms of time and interest, will mediate the relationship between follower promotive and prohibitive voice and leader decision-making.*

## 2.6.2 LMX, Follower Voice and Leader Attention and Decision-Making

Liden, Sparrowe, and Wayne (1997) suggest that the relationship between a leader and a follower can greatly influence the follower's work experience. Considering the formal authority the leader has over the follower, this makes intuitive sense. However, the logic transfers well to the potential impact followers can have on the leader. Although it is true that the follower does not hold institutionally sanctioned dominion over the leader, there may still be sway (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993). For example, a follower can behaviourally support a leader's decisions and directions, or do so only partially, or do so not at all. A follower can pass important information to the leader, or give it to someone else, or keep it under wraps. A follower can leverage his or her own social network to support the goals of the leader, or use this power for other purposes. Leaders may use

monitoring, organizational routines, and group norms to harness the power of the follower, but most, if not all, followers maintain a significant amount of leeway that can be directed at will. In other words, followers can choose the degree to which they will support a leader (Shamir et al., 1993).

Change agents (not necessarily leaders) who have a good relationship with followers are less likely to encounter resistance. Ford et al. (2008) review research that suggests that when there is low trust between users and change agents, employees are more likely to be cynical and critical about the change, and less committed to making it work. In general, trust in management is considered a key variable affecting affective, cognitive and behavioural resistance to change (Oreg, 2006). High quality LMX relationships are characterized by high levels of trust (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

People are more receptive to advice from people with whom there is a close relationship (Feng & MacGeorge, 2006). Therefore, leaders may be more likely to notice and move to act on messages from followers with whom there is a stronger LMX relationship. This may be an effort by the leader to preserve the relationship (Goldsmith & Fitch, 1997), but also because the leader may believe a high LMX follower will be more motivated to provide good information.

Work by Petty and Cacioppo (1981, 1986) suggest the mechanism through which messages from a high LMX follower may have a greater impact on a leader. They have developed the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) which proposes two routes to persuasion – a central path and a peripheral one. The central route involves the listener taking careful consideration of the message content and reflecting on the objective merit of the evidence and reasoning. The peripheral route involves a consideration of cues outside the scope of the main message, such as attractiveness of the sender, message length, or number of arguments.

Two main factors are seen to influence which route will be used: motivation and ability (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). Messages vary in terms of how much they interest the listener. Central processing requires more mental effort, so only when a person has high involvement with the message will motivation be sufficient to enable central processing

to take place. A personally relevant message may compel the listener to gather further elaboration on the initial information. When the person has low involvement, peripheral processing is more likely. Ability may also affect cognitive processing. If a person is cognitively not able to make sense of a message, peripheral processing may be relied upon. When a cognitively taxed leader does not have all information to make a decision, he/she may need to rely on peripheral processing (e.g. messages from trusted followers) as a cognitive shortcut rather than taking the time and effort to gather enough information to use central processing.

Chaiken and colleagues (Chaiken, 1980; Chaiken, Liberman, & Eagly, 1989; Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994) describe a similar conceptualization in the Heuristic Systematic Model (HSM) of persuasion. The systematic mode of processing is “a comprehensive, analytic orientation in which perceivers access and scrutinize all informational input for its relevance and importance to their judgment task, and integrate all useful information in forming their judgments” (Chaiken et al., 1989, p. 212). The second mode – heuristic processing – is less cognitively taxing, and allows people “to use simple inferential rules, schemata, or cognitive heuristics to formulate their judgments and decisions” (Chaiken et al., 1989, p. 213). Heuristic processing may be conscious or subconsciously used. Leaders who rely on messages from certain followers may be using heuristic processing.

Central and systematic processing modes are conceptually very similar. However, in terms of differences between the two types of secondary processing presented in the ELM and HSM models, peripheral processing can be described as any mechanism that causes attitude change without argument scrutiny. This could include changes due to operant and classical conditioning. Heuristic processing is less broad, and refers only to the mental decision rules or heuristic cues that simplify thinking and would be a subset of peripheral processing (Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994; Gass & Seiter, 2011).

Like ELM, HSM is based on the premise that people are ‘cognitive misers’ who will attend to only as much as they need to in order to make a judgment – no more or no less (Chaiken et al., 1989). This sufficiency principle suggests that people are prone to balance systematic and heuristic processing in order to achieve cognitive efficiency – and

as with ELM, motivation and ability are the mechanisms that determine which mode is dominant.

The trust that a leader has in the follower can be viewed as a peripheral or heuristic cue. In a review of this literature, Pornpitakpan (2004) summarizes extensive work that indicates when people are unmotivated or unable to process a message, they rely on source credibility as a cue. This supports the idea that leaders are likely to notice and act on messages from trusted followers because they could be expected to provide high-quality advice.

A high degree of credibility indicates that an individual has significant expertise and trustworthiness. Some researchers also make a case for a third dimension of credibility that seems to be connected to the idea of a positive relationship between the source and the receiver. Specifically, McCroskey and Teven's (1999) third dimension of 'goodwill' represents a perception of caring. Ohanian's (1990) attractiveness dimension is similar in that it depends on likeability and familiarity. In the case of leaders and followers, there is often a history that allows for the leader to determine how much credence should be given to the follower's message. The credible source will be believed and trusted, and the personal connection could provide a basis for the first two dimensions.

Feng and MacGeorge (2006) note that the persuasion literature has not given enough notice to the personal relationship dynamic that may be affecting advice-giving and advice-taking. Participants in their study were found to be more receptive to advice from people with whom they were close. The authors note that these findings are consistent with research that has shown the persuasive power of the source characteristics of trustworthiness, liking and similarity. They propose several reasons why people are more receptive to close contacts. It may be that someone close is thought to know more about the issue or about the decision-maker, thus the advice may be of higher quality. If there is an expectation of care and concern from the advisor, he or she may be thought to be more motivated to provide good advice. It may also be that there is a weaker psychological burden when advice is taken from someone with whom there is a bond. One can 'lose face' by accepting advice - it may be seen as an indication of ignorance or

incompetence. The potential for this type of cost is decreased when the contact is a close contact.

The arguments above lead to the following hypotheses.

*Hypothesis 4: Leaders will spend more time on (Hypothesis 4a) and indicate more interest in (Hypothesis 4b) voice from high LMX followers.*

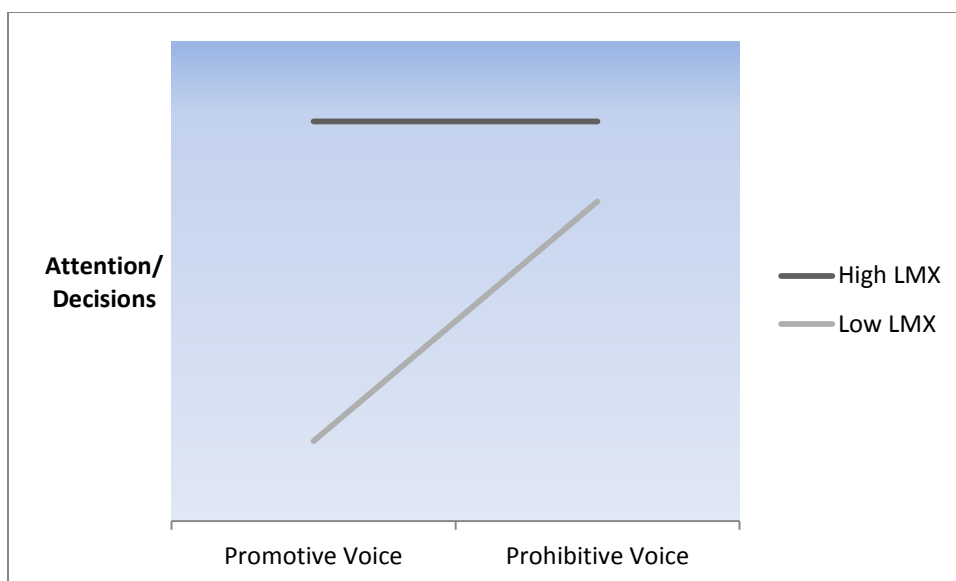
*Hypothesis 5: High LMX followers will more strongly influence leader decisions.*

Much of the innovation literature has either looked at the creation of ideas or the implementation of ideas, but seldom both at the same time (Axtell et al., 2000). Studies that do look at both steps often collapse the two into one measure (Scott & Bruce, 1994). This does not differentiate between the mainly individual level creativity needed to develop ideas, and the social interaction that is often needed to get things done in a workplace (Axtell et al., 2000). In other words, getting an idea put into place often means first persuading others to lend support. In a study of shop floor innovation, it was found that employees who had greater team leader and manager support had more suggestions move forward from the idea stage to an actual implementation of the idea (Axtell et al., 2000). This may be because a follower who is engaged in a high LMX relationship with the leader may be able to: (1) communicate more fully or more often with the leader about the issue; (2) be better positioned to help the leader determine how to deal with the issue; and (3) be more likely to help in the implementation of the decision. Thus leaders are likely to find LMX level of the message sender more salient (and influential) than message type when LMX levels are high but not when LMX levels are low.

*Hypothesis 6: LMX will moderate the relationship between follower voice and leader attention in terms of time (Hypothesis 6a) and interest (Hypothesis 6b) such that prohibitive voice from low LMX followers will receive more leader attention than prohibitive voice from low LMX followers, but both prohibitive and promotive voice from high LMX followers will receive high levels of attention.*

*Hypothesis 7: LMX will moderate the relationship between follower voice and leader decision-making such that prohibitive voice from low LMX followers will influence decisions more than prohibitive voice from low LMX followers, but both prohibitive and promotive voice from high LMX followers will highly influence decisions.*

The hypotheses of the moderated relationships are depicted in Figure 2.



**Figure 2: How LMX Levels are Expected to Moderate the Relationships Between Voice and Attention/Decision-Making**

### 2.6.3 Leader Regulatory Focus, Follower Voice and Leader Attention

Higgins (2000) suggests that information that matches an individual's regulatory focus will be remembered better than information that does not. Regulatory fit is positively associated with engagement (Cacioppo, Priester, & Berntson, 1993; J. Shah et al., 1998),

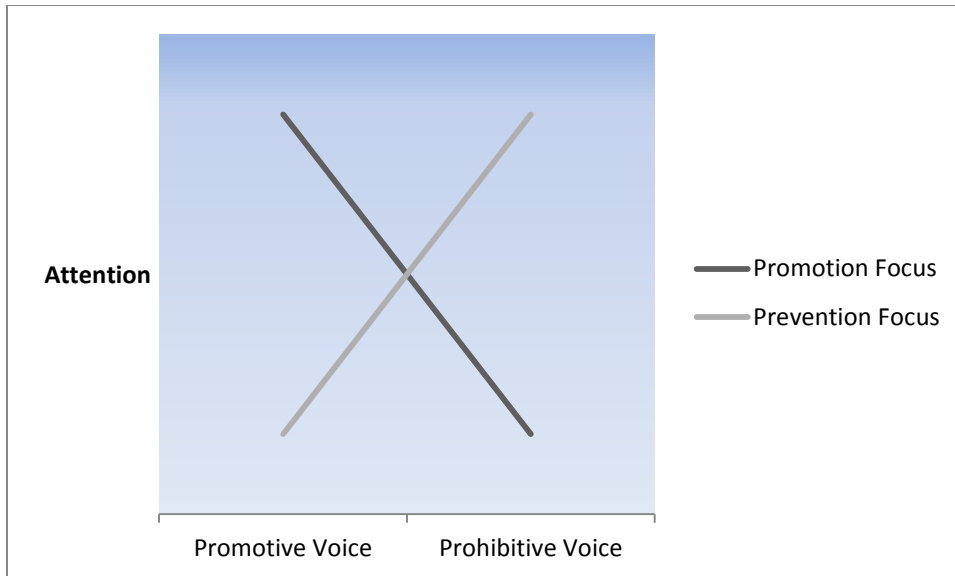


so it is proposed that leaders will be more apt to notice or connect to messages that match their regulatory focus. This is consistent with research that indicates persuasion is higher when messages have a connection to one's regulatory focus (Cesario et al., 2008). This may be because fit between message and focus make the message easier to process (Cesario et al., 2008).

A promotion focus has been shown to prime people to be open to change and risk-taking (Kark & Van Dijk, 2007). A prevention focus, on the other hand, highlights a need for security and stability, vigilance, and risk aversion. Promotive voice focuses on opportunities to improve the workplace, thus this type of voice may be more salient to a leader with a promotion regulatory focus. In contrast, prohibitive voice focuses on threats to the workplace, thus it may be more salient to a leader with a prevention regulatory focus.

*Hypothesis 8: The regulatory focus of the leader will moderate the relationship between follower voice and leader attention, such that leaders with a strong promotion regulatory focus will pay more attention to promotive voice and less attention to prohibitive voice in terms of time (Hypothesis 8a) and interest (Hypothesis 8b) and leaders with a strong prevention regulatory focus will pay more attention to prohibitive voice and less attention to promotive voice in terms of time (Hypothesis 8c) and interest (Hypothesis 8d).*

The hypotheses of the moderated relationships are depicted in Figure 3.



**Figure 3: How Regulatory Focus is Expected to Moderate the Relationship Between Voice and Attention**

### 3 Methodology

The methodology for collecting the data in this quasi-experimental field study is included in this chapter. First, information is presented on the participants of this study – the leaders and their followers from a varied group of organizations that completed online surveys. Second, the procedure of how leaders and followers completed their separate online surveys over two waves is described. Briefly, I explain how followers were asked to read six in-basket type scenarios about a work-related change situation and asked to choose messages to send to leaders to help the leaders make management decisions on these six issues. I detail how leaders were later presented with the same scenarios, and given the opportunity to read advice messages that were purportedly from followers. In fact, messages were not from followers, they were pre-set and made to vary in terms of voice type (promotive and prohibitive) and LMX level of the follower sender.

Information is presented on the procedure used to measure how much attention (time and interest) leaders gave to each message and which messages helped to determine the decision of the leader in how to respond to each scenario issue. Third in this chapter is a

listing of the steps that were taken to avoid common method bias. Fourth, the manipulation check that showed leaders did believe that the messages that were presented were indeed from their actual followers is described. Fifth, this chapter ends with details on the measures used in this dissertation, including the in-basket scenarios, demographics, LMX, and situational and chronic regulatory focus.

### 3.1 Participants

Potential participants were identified by contacting Southwestern Ontario organizations listed in business directories and asking for permission to approach leaders and their followers. Representatives at ten organizations agreed and provided email contact information for one or more leaders and his/her followers. These organizations were in a variety of industries (e.g. food manufacturing, metal casting, aerospace, web design, developer of medical devices) and were of different sizes (22% had under 250 employees, 22% had between 251 and 750 employees, 19% had between 751 and 1000 employees, and 37% had over 1000 employees).

A total of 33 leaders and their followers were sent by email details of the project and an invitation to participate in this study on leader decision-making. The invitation included the information that participants would be entered in a random drawing for a \$100 gift card (one draw for leaders, one draw for followers).

Twenty-seven leaders voluntarily completed both of the study surveys, for a full response rate of 82%. An a priori power test indicated that approximately 28 leaders were needed to attain a .80 power level. Each of the ten organizations contributed an average of 2.7 leaders (range = 1 to 7). Most leaders were male (70%), white (92%) married (93%), between the ages of 41 and 60 years (81%), a graduate of college/university (93%), with some holding a graduate degree (33%). All leaders self-identified as a Director/Owner (59%) or Manager (41%), with none indicating supervisory status. Most leaders placed themselves in the top third of the company hierarchy (74%) and none placed in the bottom third. Tenure with the organization was high, with most leaders having worked for their current organization more than 10 years (66%). Smaller proportions had

between five and ten year tenure (15%), between 1 and 5 years (15%), and between 3 months and 1 year (4%).

To participate, each leader was required to have at least two direct-report followers. Each of the followers needed a minimum of three months tenure with the leader in order to allow enough time for the relationship to be differentiated (Bauer & Green, 1996; Graen & Scandura, 1987; Nahrgang, Morgeson, & Ilies, 2009). A total of 119 followers of these participating leaders were asked to complete a follower survey, and 101 followers did so (response rate of 84.9%). Of the responding followers, 16% had between 3 months and 1 year tenure with the leader, 54% had between 1 and 5 years, 25% had between 5 and 10 years, and 5% had over 10 years tenure with the leader.

## 3.2 Procedure

Data were collected in two waves. In Wave 1, followers received an email message with details of the study and a link to an online survey. If they clicked on the link, they were connected to online survey software where they were asked to: (a) complete a demographic questionnaire; (b) read six in-basket scenarios and indicate whether they would like to send either a pre-written promotive or prohibitive message to the leader who would later be asked to make decisions on the same scenarios (in-basket - voice task – see Appendix A for full details); and (c) write a free-form statement of up to 100 words directed at their specific leader encouraging him or her to pay attention to and use their messages when making decisions. Some of the free-form statements from followers were later shown to leaders at the start of their second survey, as noted below. The inclusion of these statements was meant to increase the likelihood that leaders would believe that the messages in the second survey were indeed from their actual followers.

Followers were told that each time their leader considered and acted on follower recommendations the follower would receive additional chances for a draw to win a prize valued at \$100. Each time the follower made a recommendation that the leader did not eventually read or act on, some chances for the draw would be lost. This was a deception. The data from this stage was not used in this study, but it was imperative that the leaders believed they were responding to messages from real followers and that both

leaders and followers believed that, like a real life situation, there would be consequences of leaders supporting or not supporting suggestions from followers. All followers who at least tried to influence their leader received an additional draw entry.

Also in Wave 1, leaders received an email message with details of the study and an invitation to click a link to an online survey. If they followed the link, they were directed to online survey software that led them through a demographic questionnaire and measures of LMX, situational Regulatory Focus, and chronic Regulatory Focus.

Once the leader had completed the survey from the first Wave, it was possible to determine a high and low LMX follower for each leader. This information was imbedded in a second leader survey that presented the same six management scenarios already reviewed by followers (see in-basket – decision task Appendix A). To categorize followers as having a low or high quality LMX relationship, the scores were split at the median (Markham, Yammarino, Murry, & Palanski, 2010). The follower with the highest LMX score above the median was defined as a high LMX follower, the follower with the lowest LMX score below the median was designated as the low LMX follower. A paired samples t-test indicated that the process of categorizing employees into high and low LMX bins was effective. Those classified as high LMX had a significantly higher mean LMX level compared to those classified as low LMX ( $t(26) = 8.01, p = .000$ ).

In Wave 2, leaders were sent an email that linked to the customized second leader survey. At the beginning of this second survey, leaders were informed that some of their followers had read the scenarios previously and had been given the chance to offer advice to the leader about what to do. They were told that some of this information from followers would likely be important in helping them make a good decision, and that followers who were influential would get increased opportunities to win a random draw for a \$100 gift card. Leaders were then presented with the statements from the followers who had chosen to write a self-written note in their survey encouraging the leaders to follow their advice (78% of leaders received at least one statement from a follower). Both low and high LMX followers sent encouraging statements to their leaders, with 45%

of the statements seen by the leader coming from high LMX followers, and 55% of the statements coming from low LMX followers.

Each of the six scenarios offered some background information on a particular issue related to the software implementation. For example, one scenario told the leader that a set of guidelines had been created to help with the software implementation, but the leader had not had the opportunity to read the guidelines and ensure they are appropriate. However, some of the leader's followers had assessed the list of guidelines, and had sent messages around that issue to help with the leader's decision. The leader was informed that changes to the guidelines could lead to a delayed implementation plan, which could reflect poorly on the leader. However, if the guidelines were wrong and were not adjusted, that could cause other negative outcomes which could reflect poorly on the leader.

The leader was then told that two messages were available. These messages varied in two ways: (1) LMX level of the follower who sent the message; and (2) type of voice (promotive or prohibitive). These options were combined to make six conditions across the six scenarios. See Table 1 for a description of the conditions. The order of conditions across scenarios was randomized using an online randomizer ([www.randomizer.org](http://www.randomizer.org)) and customizing each survey. Thus, each leader received a second survey that had a unique ordering of conditions across the scenarios and actual high and low LMX follower names attached to messages.

Condition	LMX	Voice Type
1	High	Promotive
	High	Prohibitive
2	Low	Promotive
	Low	Prohibitive
3	Low	Promotive
	High	Promotive
4	Low	Prohibitive
	High	Prohibitive
5	High	Promotive
	Low	Prohibitive
6	High	Prohibitive
	Low	Promotive

**Table 1: Experimental Conditions**

After initially reading the scenario information, the leader was given information about the type of message and the name of the employee who purportedly sent it, and asked to indicate his/her level of interest in each option. For example, after reading a scenario, the leader would see this type of information:

*Tom has some information about a possible opportunity that could make the work situation better.*

*Mark has some information about a possible threat that could make the work situation worse.*

In this example, Tom and Mark would be the names of the followers who were designated as the high LMX follower and the low LMX follower as per the leader's ratings on the leader's first survey.

Leaders could show interest by distributing 100 points amongst the two options with those garnering the highest interest receiving the most points. The leader could give each option a number of points ranging from zero to 100, to a maximum of 100 points across the two choices. For example, all 100 points could be given to one option with 0 points given to the other; each option could receive 50 points; one option could receive 75 points while the other receives 25 points; or some other combination.

Leaders would not need to use all 100 points or even any of them. Leaders were informed that if a choice generated very high interest then it should receive 75+ points, a choice that generates high interest should receive between 50 and 74 points, a choice that generates moderate interest should receive between 26 and 49 points, and a choice that generates little or no interest should receive between 0 and 25 points. This generated scores (range: 0 to 100) on leader interest in: promotive voice and prohibitive voice from both high and low LMX followers (measure of attention #1).

Once leaders indicated interest in the two messages, they were informed that they had a maximum of one minute each to review the messages from the follower(s) prior to making their decision. They had to click on a box to access each message. The amount of time spent looking at each message ranged from 0 to 60 seconds (measure of attention #2). Here is an example of promotive and prohibitive messages, respectively:

*Message from Tom: Guideline #1 is not as clear as it should be. It needs to be changed if we are to be able to collect some additional useful data. If we change it, we will be better off. I think Guideline #1 should be rewritten.*

*Message from Mark: Guideline #2 is not as clear as it could be. It needs to be changed or else the company may lose some useful data. We need to change it or we will be worse off. I think Guideline #2 should be rewritten.*

Leaders were then asked to make a decision on what action to take. The leader was given three choices. Two of the choices corresponded to the initial options that were offered, the other choice was to take no action. Here is an example of the choices given to the leader:



*Rewrite Guideline #1 as per Tom* \_\_\_\_

*Rewrite Guideline #2 as per Mark* \_\_\_\_

*Do not rewrite any of the guidelines* \_\_\_\_

Leaders had 100 points to distribute across these three options (measure of leader decision-making #1). Leaders did not need to use all 100 points. They were told that an option to which the leader was fully and solely committed should receive 75+ points, an option that the leader was highly committed to should receive between 50 and 74 points, an option that generated moderate commitment should receive between 26 and 49 points, and an option that generated little or no commitment should receive between 0 and 25 points. This generated ratio scores (range: 0 to 100) on how committed leaders were to each option.

After all scenarios were completed, leaders were given the opportunity to explain how they made their decisions. Specifically, leaders were asked: *“Please describe how you made your decisions on the various scenarios. In other words, please describe what influenced your choices, if you can.”* This statement was followed by a large, open text box in which each leader could detail his/her decision-making process.

At the end of the survey, but prior to survey submission, leaders were debriefed on the deception in the study and asked to not share this information with any other leaders or followers in the organization. This was included to ensure that colleagues of the participant who had not yet finished the online survey(s) were not made aware of the deception. The importance of all leaders believing that messages came from actual followers was described as important to the research objectives.

In summary, followers were first asked to read six management scenarios and to choose how to advise their leaders on the best way to respond to the issues. This data was not used in this study, but the process was included so that leaders would believe they were receiving messages from actual followers. Later, leaders were given the same scenarios. Prior to making a decision on how to respond to each scenario, the leader was given the option to see messages that varied by type of voice (promotive or prohibitive) and the

LMX level (high or low) of the follower sender. These messages were presented as advice from followers on how to deal with the situation. Leaders were asked to indicate how much interest they had in each message on a scale from 1 to 100 (attention measure #1). The time leaders spent looking at each of the follower messages was measured in seconds (attention measure #2). Leaders were then asked to indicate how much they would like to make a decision consistent with the advice in each message on a scale from 1 to 100 (decision-making measure).

### 3.3 Steps to Control Common Method Bias

A number of techniques suggested by Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003) were used to reduce common method bias. There was a temporal separation of predictor and criterion variables in the form of a significant time lag between the leaders' completion of (1) the measures of LMX and regulatory focus and (2) the in-basket task (dependent variable measures). The average separation between a leader's first and second survey was 45 days (range = 17 to 86 days). Neither leaders nor followers were informed of the actual model being tested, instead they were told that the research was focused on the effectiveness of leader decision-making. Disguising the connection between predictor and criterion variables causes a psychological separation. In addition, the in-basket task had a dramatically different response format relative to the other measures, resulting in a methodological separation. The introduction of temporal, psychological, and methodological distance is expected to reduce contextual retrieval cues; and decrease participant's ability and /or motivation to infer missing information or use previous answers as the basis for subsequent responses (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Evaluation apprehension was reduced by assuring the leaders that there was no right or wrong answers on the LMX and Regulatory Focus scales. This was designed to make leaders less likely to edit their responses to meet perceived social desirability norms (Podsakoff et al., 2003). To reduce bias due to priming effects, the order in which the conditions were presented were randomized across scenarios, as mentioned previously.

## 3.4 Manipulation Check

At the end of the second survey, leaders were asked to explain why they responded to the messages in the ways they did. A majority (89%) of leaders offered explanations. A review of this qualitative data shows that leaders did seem to believe the messages were from specific followers. For example, one leader stated, “I looked back at my past experiences of getting information from these two employees and how reliable that information was. In other words - how much could I rely on their feedback? How credible are they and how well do they understand the organization and structure?” Another leader explained, “I trust that (*employee name*) would only make recommendations that would benefit the team and our final product.” Another stated: “Because there was little information I could verify myself in this exercise, I had to rely on how much I trusted each person's perspective and experience.” This indicates that the manipulation was successful and leaders did tie messages to specific employees.

## 3.5 Measures

### 3.5.1 In-basket Scenarios

The dependent variable measures of attention and decision-making were embedded within an in-basket (or in-box) exercise. In-basket scenarios were developed from the eight dimensions of the General Management In-Box (GMIB: Joines, 2011). These dimensions are based on common management challenges, including managing new ideas from employees; holding people accountable for their actions; acting on input; dealing with conflict; coaching for improved performance; managing poor performance; enforcement of policies and procedures; and managing external stakeholders (Joines, 2011). Building the scenarios around a well-developed in-basket exercise puts study participants in authentic workplace situations, adding to the realism of the task.

Commercially available since 1987, the GMIB, or its shorter form, the Managerial Skills Assessment Test (MSAT), has been completed by over 20,000 candidates. Privately published, these tests seem to be the only commercially available in-basket tests that have a broad national database and norms (Conoley & Impara, 1995).

The existing questions of the GMIB did not allow for direct testing of the hypothesized model, therefore the scenarios were redeveloped for this study. Each scenario was based on issues that might arise with a common workplace change – a new software implementation. Each is consistent with one of the dimensions represented in the GMIB test, however adaptation was necessary to ensure that each scenario allowed up to two followers to send messages about threats (prohibitive voice) and opportunities (promotive voice) to the leaders. The owner/author of the GMIB (Richard Joines) extensively reviewed the dimensions of the GMIB with the author. He read each of the redeveloped scenarios and provided editing assistance to ensure that the scenarios designed for this study were consistent with the items on the GMIB.

Prior to the main data collection phase, the messages in each scenario were pretested to ensure they were consistent with the voice construct used in this model. Specifically, four study-independent doctoral students in a business school were given the following definition of promotive and prohibitive voice:

*Both types of voice are constructive or aimed at challenging the status quo and are aimed at benefiting the organization. But promotive voice is the expression of ideas or suggestions to improve existing work practices/procedures. It points to ways that the work unit or organization can make things superior to current conditions. In other words, it focuses on factors that make the work situation better. Prohibitive voice is the expression of concern about existing or impending practices/procedures that could hurt the organization. It raises an alarm about factors that have or can cause current conditions to deteriorate. It focuses on factors that make the work situation worse.*

The doctoral students were asked to categorize each message as either promotive or prohibitive voice. There was 93% agreement that each message was aligned with the construct it was meant to represent.

A separate group of six study-independent doctoral students with managerial experience were asked to complete the in-basket measures as a pilot test. This process was used to estimate variances for the power calculations and to ensure that the scenarios were representative of common managerial issues. All feedback indicated that the scenarios had a high degree of realism, and the interest and decision demands were consistent with actual work situations. When the in-basket exercises were later rolled out to real leaders, only one participant questioned the authenticity of the in-basket scenarios. This may have been reflective of the participant's low level of experience as a leader. In this case, the participant was a front-line supervisor and the only non-managerial participant. His data were omitted from the study analysis.

### 3.5.2 Demographic Questionnaire

The demographic variables included leaders' age, gender, education, marital status, tenure in the organization, tenure in the current position, department, level in the organization, and number of followers.

### 3.5.3 LMX

Leaders were asked to complete a measure of LMX for each follower. Scandura and Graen's (1984) well-used measure of LMX was used ( $\alpha = .70$ ) due to its high criterion validity (Liden, Wayne, & Stilwell, 1993). The response key was modified to a seven point scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' as per the process used by Liden, Wayne and Stilwell (1993) (see Appendix B).

### 3.5.4 Regulatory Focus

To assess leaders' regulatory focus, the Work Regulatory Focus (WRF) scale (see Appendix C) which measures the promotion ( $\alpha = .51$ ) and prevention ( $\alpha = .79$ ) dimensions of an individual in the workplace (Neubert et al., 2008), was used. This 18-item measure uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). An example of a question that taps the promotion dimension is: "I tend to take risks at work in order to achieve success". An example of a question that taps the prevention dimension is: "At work I focus my attention on completing my assigned responsibilities". This measure was chosen because it focuses on the psychological state of the leader at a particular point in time (Neubert et al., 2008) and is theoretically based on Higgins' (1997) original definition of regulatory focus theory.

The WRF scale assesses situational regulatory focus (i.e. regulatory focus in the work domain). Shah, Higgins, and Friedman (1998) found that chronic regulatory focus can influence the effect of situational regulatory focus on motivation and performance. Therefore, leaders also completed the Regulatory Focus Strategies scale (Ouschan, Boldero, Kashima, Wakimoto, & Kashima, 2007) that assesses chronic regulatory focus promotion ( $\alpha = .58$ ) and prevention ( $\alpha = .77$ ) dimensions (see Appendix D). This 14-item measure also uses a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). An example of a promotion dimension question is: "Taking risks is essential for success". An example of a prevention dimension question is: "Being cautious is the best policy for success". This measure was chosen because there is evidence that it compares favourably to other regulatory focus measures in terms of scale reliability and construct validity (Imai, 2012).

## Chapter 2

### 4 Results

The descriptive statistics for and the correlations among the variables of interest can be found in Table 2.

	Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	High LMX	43.59	3.23	1.00								
2	Low LMX	38.44	3.83	0.48*	1.00							
3	Time	13.79	4.51	0.10	0.03	1.00						
4	Interest	49.30	10.66	0.08	0.15	0.18	1.00					
5	Decision	43.67	13.18	0.02	0.00	0.15	0.77**	1.00				
6	WRF Promotion	3.35	0.40	0.02	0.10	-0.29	0.19	0.21	1.00			
7	WRF Prevention	3.66	0.57	0.02	0.48*	0.04	0.13	0.00	0.35	1.00		
8	RFS Promotion	3.71	0.47	0.56**	0.12	-0.13	0.13	0.12	0.18	-0.03	1.00	
9	RFS Prevention	2.83	0.63	-0.16	-0.18	-0.36	-0.17	0.18	0.07	-0.13	-0.06	1.00

*Note.* N = 27. WRF = Work Regulatory Focus Scale (situational regulatory focus measure); RFS = Regulatory Focus Strategies Scale (chronic regulatory focus measure). \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ .

**Table 2: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations**

To test the hypotheses, marginal model analyses were run. This is a type of linear model that accounts for repeated response measures on the same subject. The non-independence of the responses was accounted for through the use of a compound symmetry covariance structure. LMX, message type, and condition were the within-subject variables. An advantage of using linear mixed models is that it uses listwise deletion to deal with missing data. Considering the sample size of this study, this was preferable to a multivariate approach that might delete all of the responses from the participant if a subset of the data were missing.

Hypothesis 1a stated that leaders would give more attention (time and interest) to prohibitive voice compared to promotive voice. Results show that leaders did not spend significantly more time looking at either type of message ( $F(1,65) = .02, p = .89$ ). Thus, Hypothesis 1a was not supported. There was a significant effect of voice type on leaders' interest in messages ( $F(1,64) = 7.96, p = .006$ ). Although it was predicted that leaders would show more interest in prohibitive messages, they actually had significantly more interest in promotive voice ( $M = 56.53, SE = 2.46$ ) compared to prohibitive voice ( $M = 45.01, SE = 2.49$ ). Hypothesis 1b was not supported.

A similar outcome was found in the next test. Hypothesis 2 predicted that leaders would be more likely to make decisions consistent with prohibitive voice compared to promotive voice. It turned out to be quite different – there was a significant effect of voice type on leaders' decisions ( $F(1,73) = 4.43, p = .039$ ), but leaders made decisions consistent with promotive voice messages ( $M = 48.28, SE = 3.89$ ) more than they made decisions consistent with prohibitive voice messages ( $M = 36.59, SE = 3.50$ ). Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Hypothesis 3 posited that attention would mediate the relationship between voice and leader decisions. According to Judd, Kenny, and McClelland (2001), two conditions were necessary to establish mediation. In this case, there would have to be a difference in scores in the same direction for both the attention and decision variables. As seen above, this condition was met for interest, although not for time. That is, promotive voice led to both higher interest and decision scores than prohibitive voice. The second condition requires that the differences in the mediating variable predict differences in the dependent variable. However, in this case, interest score differences were not predictive of the decision score differences,  $F(1,48) = .02, p = .890$ . Thus mediation was not established, and Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

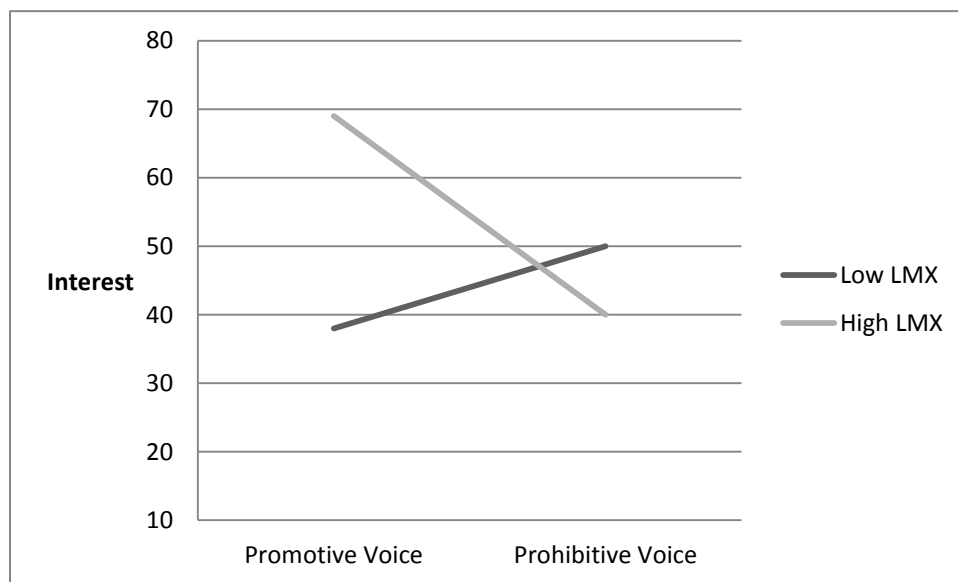
Hypotheses 4a and 4b stated that leaders would give more attention (time and interest) to voice from high LMX followers compared to low LMX followers. Results show that leaders did not spend more time looking at the messages from high LMX followers ( $F(1,99) = .02, p = .895$ ), so Hypothesis 4a was not supported. However, leaders did



show more interest in messages from high LMX followers ( $F(1,97) = 9.55, p = .003$ ). Hypothesis 4b was supported.

Similarly, Hypothesis 5 suggested that LMX levels would affect leader decisions. There was a significant effect of LMX level on leaders' decisions ( $F(1,91) = 4.57, p = .035$ ). Leaders made decisions consistent with messages from high LMX followers more than messages from low LMX followers. Hypothesis 5 was supported.

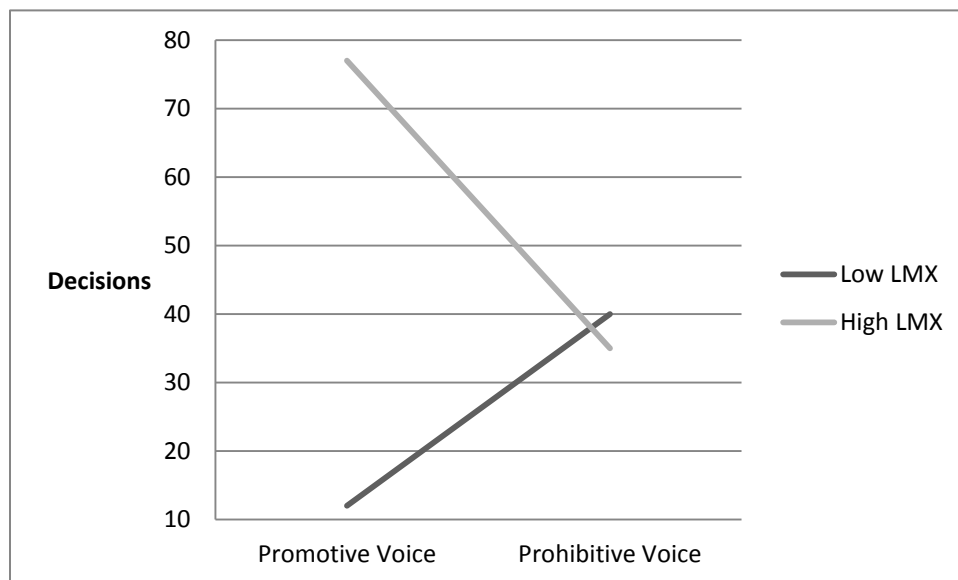
Contrary to predictions, LMX level did not moderate the relationship between voice and time,  $F(1,75) = .01, p = .907$ . Hypothesis 6a was not supported. There was only a marginal effect on the relationship between voice and interest,  $F(1,72) = 3.79, p = .055$ . See Figure 4 for an illustration of how LMX marginally moderated the relationship between voice and interest. Hypothesis 6b was marginally supported.



**Figure 4: How LMX Moderates the Relationship Between Voice and Attention (Interest)**

Hypothesis 7 was supported, LMX level did moderate the relationship between voice and decisions,  $F(1,74) = 7.10, p = .009$ . The form of this moderation is depicted in Figure 5. Promotive voice was much more effective in influencing leader decisions when it was sent by high LMX followers compared to when it was sent by low LMX followers.

However, effectiveness of prohibitive voice in terms of influencing leader decisions did not vary by the LMX levels of the message sender.



**Figure 5: How LMX Moderates the Relationship Between Voice and Decisions**

Hypothesis 8 suggested that regulatory focus moderates the voice-attention relationship. These analyses included a consideration of the chronic and the situational regulatory focus measures, each with separate scores for the promotion and the prevention dimensions. Situational prevention regulatory focus scores did not moderate the relationship between voice and time ( $F(1,75) = .22, p = .643$ ), nor did situational promotion regulatory focus scores, ( $F(1,75) = 1.70, p = .196$ ), even when controlling for chronic regulatory focus. Similarly, situational prevention regulatory focus scores did not moderate the relationship between voice and interest ( $F(1,71) = 1.47, p = .229$ ), nor did situational promotion regulatory focus scores ( $F(1,71) = 1.31, p = .257$ ). Hypotheses 8a, 8b, 8c, and 8d were not supported.

## Chapter 3

### 5 Discussion

#### 5.1 Overview

The purpose of this study was to examine how follower voice and LMX levels influence leader attention and decision-making, and how LMX and the leader's regulatory focus moderates the relationships. The hypotheses were tested with a quasi-experimental field study with a sample of 27 leaders and their followers. Several of the hypotheses received support, and many of the results are notable.

This chapter presents a summary and integration of the results. Support for the hypotheses is discussed in terms of the theoretical rationale previously discussed in Chapter 2, and where applicable, potential explanations for their lack of support are offered. This discussion is divided into seven sections. First, the effect of follower voice on leader attention and decision-making is discussed. Second, the ways in which LMX affects leaders' attention and decision making both directly and as a moderator of the follower voice-leader attention and follower voice-leader decision-making relationships is considered. Third, the results of the examination of the regulatory focus moderation of the follower voice-leader attention path are reviewed. Fourth, the methodological strengths and weaknesses of this study are examined and their potential implications are considered. Fifth, the theoretical contributions of this dissertation are described. Sixth, the practical contributions are enumerated. Finally, this chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

#### 5.2 Follower Voice and Leader Attention and Decision-Making

I predicted that leaders would give more attention to and make decisions consistent with prohibitive voice compared to promotive voice. These hypotheses were not supported. Leaders did not give more time and interest to prohibitive voice messages, nor did they

make decisions consistent with prohibitive voice messages. However, leaders were not indifferent to the voice they were receiving. Leaders indicated a significantly larger amount of interest in promotive voice relative to prohibitive voice. Leaders also were more likely to make decisions consistent with promotive voice. Thus, voice type was influential, although contrary to expectations.

These findings are inconsistent with the prediction of prospect theory (Tversky & Kahneman, 1981) that is, people prefer to avoid loss more than they prefer the opportunity to gain. It may be that the losses and gains in this study were not large or specific enough to trigger a reaction consistent with prospect theory. Larger stakes, or ones with more clearly defined negative outcomes, might lead to different results. An alternative explanation may be that the ten organizations involved in this study were more opportunity-oriented than average. It is conceivable that organizations that had the available 'slack' to participate in this research may be more growth (or opportunity) oriented than organizations that are struggling (Cyert & March, 1963; Daniel, Lohrke, Fornaciari, & Turner, 2004). Leaders in organizations with a certain amount of slack resources are often more likely to experiment and be proactive (George, 2005). Perhaps after a long period of global financial upheaval, leaders, in general, are tired of threats and more open to opportunities. It is also plausible that leaders may be more open to opportunities when they originate with followers. In other words, followers may be considered less threatening than other parties. Therefore, leaders may find threats more influential when they come from parties perceived as less supportive, such as customers or senior leaders. It is interesting to note that support for these unexpected findings can be found in the championing literature, where there is evidence that effective champions of innovation frame their causes as opportunities, while ineffective champions frame their cause as threats (Howell, 2005). This suggests that in a work situation promotive messages might carry more weight than prohibitive messages.

I expected that attention would mediate the relationship between follower voice and leader decision-making. This was not the case. This would seem to contradict the premise of Ocasio's (1997) attention-based view of the firm. Two explanations may be posited for this discrepant result. First, it is possible that the study design was too fine-

grained, with only two brief signals competing for the leader's attention. Second, it is conceivable that there was not sufficient differentiation between the attention and decision-making constructs. It may also be that *beyond a minimum level*, a leader's attention does not have to tie to decisions. For example, perhaps in some instances decisions can actually influence the amount of attention an item is given. Thus, if a leader takes notice of a signal and decides to quickly act on it, further attention is not needed. In that case, the quick decision influences the amount of attention the item receives. As an alternate example, in some situations leaders may spend a great deal of attention on an issue, only to ultimately determine that the situation does not require action. In that case, the attention level may be high but the recommendation made does not follow the issue. Or perhaps the leader will try to fairly distribute attention across issues, but be less equity-minded when it comes to making decisions.

### 5.3 LMX, Follower Voice, and Leader Attention and Decision-Making

I predicted that leaders would give more attention (time and interest) to and make decisions consistent with voice messages from high LMX followers relative to low LMX followers. Although leaders did not differentiate between messages from high and low LMX followers in terms of time, they did show more interest in and make decisions consistent with messages from high LMX followers. This suggests that leaders do not carefully weigh each message on its own merits, instead, messages are sometimes deemed to be more valuable simply because they were sent by a trusted follower.

This finding may be explained through the Elaboration Likelihood Model by Petty and Cacioppo (1981, 1986) and the Heuristic Systematic Model by Chaiken and colleagues (Chaiken, 1980; Chaiken et al., 1989; Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994). Both of these models suggest that message receivers may take cognitive shortcuts when determining how to interpret messages. The results of this dissertation provide evidence that leaders rely on characteristics of the sender when determining how to respond to a work-oriented message. The high LMX level of the sender signals to the leader that the message should be given higher priority.

I hypothesized that LMX level would moderate the relationship between voice and leader attention and decision-making, such that leaders would pay more attention to followers with whom there was a high LMX relationship no matter the type of voice. The results show that the LMX level marginally moderated the path between voice and attention and LMX level did fully moderate the relationship between voice and decisions. However, the form of the moderation was different than expected. High LMX followers did not enjoy high influence across message type. High LMX followers were influential only when the voice type was promotive. That is, when promotive voice was sent by a high LMX follower, it affected the leader's interest and decision-making much more than when it was sent by a low LMX follower. Leaders responded to prohibitive messages similarly whether they were sent by high or low LMX followers. It may be that leaders are more open to opportunities from high LMX followers because leaders are more likely to trust that high LMX followers have a positive orientation that is focused on benefiting the leader and/or the organization (Feng & MacGeorge, 2006).

#### 5.4 Leader Regulatory Focus, Follower Voice and Leader Attention

In contrast to my expectations, regulatory focus did not moderate the relationship between follower voice and leader attention. It has been suggested that persuasion will be higher when messages connect to the receiver's regulatory focus because the fit between message and focus makes the message easier to process (Cesario et al., 2008). It may be that since the messages used in this study were simple, both types of messages were easy for the leaders to process, and thus no differentiation was detected.

Another explanation for these findings is that some leaders may be more apt to follow their situational regulatory focus cues than others. Although motivation has been found to increase when situational and chronic regulatory focus are in sync (J. Shah et al., 1998), this evidence comes from laboratory experiments that are missing many of the contextual elements of a field study. Leaders in real workplaces may differ in their understanding of how often they should engage in actions that are attuned to either their chronic or situational regulatory focus. For example, leaders with more confidence in themselves and their instincts may be less likely to follow cues simply because they are

valued by others (Judge, Bono, Erez, & Locke, 2005). This indicates that some leaders may be more apt to follow situational regulatory focus cues while others may be more apt to follow chronic regulatory focus inclinations.

A final explanation for the non-significant results may be found in the lag between the completion of the regulatory focus measures and the administration of the in-basket scenarios that measured leader attention. As stated earlier, there was an average 45 day gap between the time the leader completed the regulatory focus measures and the dependent variable measures (in-basket scenarios). It is possible that the situational cues had changed over that time period. No data are available on how quickly situational regulatory focus is altered over time.

## 5.5 Strengths and Weaknesses

A major strength of this study is that it used intact work groups. Much of the empirical work on leader-follower interactions uses dyads that are manufactured for the research situation. Involving leaders and followers who had both a history and a future together was critical to capturing leader outcomes that parallel actual workplace behavior. In this situation, it seems that efforts to convince leaders that messages were indeed from actual followers were successful.

An additional strength of this study is the quasi-experimental design. Manipulating the messages sent to the leader allowed for management of a major study variable. This format allowed for the heightened sense of realism that comes from a field study, and combined it with enough control to effectively test the hypotheses.

Realism was also increased through the use of the in-basket scenarios. These scenarios were based on a very well-known recruiting and development tool that is currently used in organizations. It was advantageous to be able to tie the dependent variables to a process that has been shown to be effective in the assessment of thousands of real leaders. This likely helped the leaders feel more comfortable and grounded in the process.

However, although the scenarios were based on a very common circumstance (new software implementation), the problems presented in the scenarios were fictional and not

specific to the organizations involved in the study. Leaders were instructed to respond ‘as though it was a real situation’, but that was not really the case. In addition, leaders were asked to indicate interest in each message by assigning a number of points. This is quite dissimilar to a real work situation, where attention is not systematically or numerically described. Both of these factors subtracted from the realism of the situation.

An additional strength of this dissertation is the level of creativity it exhibits. It connects a number of different literatures in uncommon ways and handles some well-known concepts in a unique manner. Voice is conceptualized as an important followership variable. The upward effects of LMX are explored. Regulatory focus is connected to the leadership literature. Leader attention is connected to decision-making, taken from a macro to a micro level, and empirically tied to lower levels of the organization. In many cases, bringing relevant constructs together strengthens both perspectives.

A weakness of this dissertation is that the sample size was quite small. This may have reduced the potential for significant results to be detected in a number of cases. There were 27 leader participants which was slightly below the number needed to reach a .80 power level as indicated by the power analysis. On the other hand, this same reasoning supports the significant results that were found. In other words, the effects that were found may be considered quite strong since they were realized in a study with such a small number of participants.

Numerous steps were taken to control common method bias, as outlined in an earlier section. Constructs are considered to be most biased by a common method when variables are similar in content, rating method, number of items, and when they are measured at the same time (Lindell & Whitney, 2001; Podsakoff et al., 2003). The temporal, psychological, and methodological separations used in this study appear to leave the variables with low vulnerability to common method variance. Nevertheless, all data in this study were collected from a common source – leaders. Future research could attempt to further minimize potential common method bias by collecting data from different sources (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Specifically, it would likely be advantageous to have a more objective measure of the dependent variable of attention. This was



attempted with the inclusion of the attention measure of time spent reading each message, although this approach was not successful in this case. For example, attention could be measured by tracking how long or how often an issue is discussed in a weekly department meeting, or how many times it is mentioned in email messages or in discussions with others.

Finally, while this study adopts a multi-faceted look at leadership, it does not go far enough with one important factor – context. Both leaders and followers are interacting within a specific context, and it is important to consider the effect of the environment in which the dyad is situated (Bligh & Kohles, 2012). The study design did include a consideration of a change context, but that is fairly general. Follow-up studies should include a more pointed consideration of the context in which the leader and follower are placed.

## 5.6 Theoretical Contribution

This study has benefited the voice literature through its integration of the LMX literature. My findings contribute to an appreciation of follower voice by showing how leaders respond to voice messages from high and low LMX followers differently. This highlights the importance and reciprocity of the specific leader-follower social exchange. It focuses on the bi-directionality of the social exchange by showing how leaders respond to the voice of followers by giving attention and making decisions in return. It broadens the common conceptualization of voice by portraying it not only as something that is given, but also as something that is actively received. Going even further, this might give birth to a view of voice and reception as a cyclical process. It may be that followers give voice, leaders respond and that response may influence how followers later give voice again.

This dissertation also significantly contributes to the voice literature by connecting it to the attention and decision-making literatures – two important leader outcomes. Traditionally, the voice literature has focused on how voice affects the well-being of the follower. The findings of this study show that follower voice is important beyond any effects on the person who gives voice. The leaders in this study were changed by

follower voice. It influenced leader attention and leader decision-making in significant ways.

My findings contribute to the followership literature by showing that followers influence leader attention and decision-making through the types of messages that they send and through the relationships they have with the leader. This model places follower voice firmly as an input and leader-related outcomes as the output. This reversal of the lens (Shamir, 2007) is important because it causes us to look at organizational dynamics in a new way, one in which there is a greater appreciation for the effect of followers on leader-related outcomes.

This study also shows an appreciation for the complexity of the leadership process. Shamir (2007) has suggested that leadership is actually co-produced by the leader and follower together and supports Graen and Uhl-Bien's (1995) contention that a simultaneous consideration of the effects of the leader, the follower and the relationship is crucial to understanding leadership. Specifically, he has called for an examination of how follower expectations, values, attitudes and characteristics affect leaders. This dissertation takes these ideas somewhat further. The construct of follower voice that is used in this study is an even more concrete example of an influential follower input. The way in which the knowledge of the follower affects leadership outcomes is given key consideration. This is consistent with the conceptual framework offered by Uhl-Bien, Marion, and McKelvey (2007) that suggests that traditional leadership models are products of a physical production system but a knowledge based economy requires a different view of leadership. They review research that suggests that in the Industrial Age the key challenge was to effectively optimize production through control systems. In contrast, the key challenge of the current Knowledge Era is to develop an environment in which to effectively accumulate and share information. Intellectual assets are seen as being distributed throughout the network rather than residing solely at the top of the organization. The findings from this study further our understanding of how information moves from lower levels of the hierarchy to higher levels and how it changes leader outcomes.

This study contributes to the LMX literature in a number of ways. First, it supports Graen and Uhl-Bien's (1995) original conceptualization of the construct. Specifically, it includes a consideration of the leader, the follower, and the relationship between them (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The findings show how follower voice and the relationship between the leader and the follower are very influential. Second, this study highlights the importance of work relationships in general, and how other research on personal relationships can inform the LMX literature. It offers evidence that work relationships can affect leader interest and decisions both directly and indirectly. Third, it suggests a mechanism through which LMX can affect work outcomes. Specifically, leaders may use LMX level as a cognitive shortcut when responding to signals from followers as per the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981, 1986) and the Heuristic Systematic Model (Chaiken, 1980; Chaiken et al., 1989; Chaiken & Maheswaran, 1994).

Ocasio's (1997) attention-based view of the firm asserts that leader attention determines organizational action; however, there has been little empirical work at the micro-level to develop our understanding of the mechanisms that direct leader attention (Ocasio, 2011). This study is one of the few to combine the top-down view of the attention literature developed by organizational scholars with the bottom-up perspective of cognitive psychology attention researchers.

Much of the work on organizational attention focuses on the way managers get the attention of the senior management team. This concentration on only the top levels ignores a significant portion of the population of any organization. This study contributes to the attention literature by answering a call to look at how signals that originate at lower levels travel up the organizational hierarchy (Rerup, 2010). The findings of this study show that those individuals who reside at lower levels can indeed significantly impact leader attention.

The attention literature also gives little notice to what happens to an issue after it has been raised. The model in this study attempts to make explicit the connection between leader attention and leader decision-making. Contrary to expectations, findings show that attention did not mediate the path between follower voice and leader decision-making.

This suggests that more work needs to be done on defining exactly how leader attention is connected to follower decision-making. Even though the mediation hypothesis was not supported, this study contributes to the attention literature by bringing an overdue focus to the empirical testing of this connection.

Another way this study contributes to the voice literature is in the nuanced manner in which it conceptualizes voice. The most commonly used measure of voice in this literature (Ng & Feldman, 2012) is Van Dyne and Lepine's (1998) scale that asks respondents to make general evaluations about a person's history of engaging in voice behaviours (sample item: *This employee develops and makes recommendations concerning issues that affect this work group*).

In her review of this area, Morrison (2011) suggests that there is an urgent need to more closely define the types of messages that may be voiced. She proposes that three main types should be studied: messages about improving something, messages about fixing something negative, and messages that are contrary to other's opinions. A recent study by Liang, Fahr, and Fahr (2012) incorporated the first two types of messages, conceptualized as promotive and prohibitive voice respectively. While Liang et al. (2012) developed a general measure of these types of voice (sample item: *This employee raises suggestions to improve the unit's working procedure*), this dissertation pushes these ideas even further by developing and integrating specific promotive and prohibitive messages that correspond to particular workplace issues. Rather than asking leaders about how followers generally participate in promotive or prohibitive voice, the design of this dissertation allowed leaders to respond to actual, specific promotive and prohibitive suggestions about a particular issue (sample item regarding features available for about-to-be-installed software - *Optional feature #1 will make work processes simpler. I think this will make recruiting easier when we need to hire more people. If we add it, we will be better off. I think we should add optional feature #1*). The messages in this study are theory-driven, yet specific, immediate, tied to a particular workplace issue, and likely to be relevant to participating leaders. Perhaps most importantly, this operationalization of voice is not dependent on the leader's ability to remember past follower actions. The findings of this study show that leaders respond very differently to the type of voice sent.

This evidence may encourage further testing of the effect of voice type on leader response.

It is relevant to note that Burris (2012) also broke down voice into smaller dimensions when he incorporated both challenging and supportive types of voice in another recent study. His breakdown of the construct compartmentalizes voice into messages from followers who challenge the status quo or messages that support the status quo. This seems to be at odds with the most accepted voice definition that makes a challenge to the status quo a key determinant of voice (Van Dyne & LePine, 1998). Both of the promotive and prohibitive types of voice in this dissertation are based on challenging the status quo.

There are many studies that look at why people speak up in the workplace, but there are very few that look at what ends up happening with specific suggestions (Dutton et al., 2002). One exception is a recent voice study by Burris (2012) that also examines leaders' response to follower voice, but in terms of performance evaluations and endorsement. The current study is consistent with this approach, but goes beyond a look at the general endorsement of follower suggestions to show how leaders' actual decisions were affected by the type of voice sent and the LMX level of the message sender.

Shamir (2007) notes that organizational change scholars have traditionally portrayed leaders as instigators of change, while followers are seen as the resisters of change. He advocates for turning this view around to see how leaders resist followers' suggestions for change. This seems like a fair avenue for exploration, but the process used in this study may depict an even more balanced view of the interaction between leaders and followers. The findings of this study show how followers can support leader (or organizational) initiatives. The results also indicate how leaders sometimes resist suggestions from followers. Thus, this study is not turning the lens to put the leaders in the background and followers in the foreground. Instead, it is taking a more panoramic view of how the leaders and followers are interacting together to construct organizational outcomes.

Consistent with the literature, attention was operationalized in terms of time spent looking at messages and interest scores. However, the results show that the amount of time spent looking at messages did not differ across any of the conditions. This is a contribution because it shows that there are circumstances in which attention cannot be effectively operationalized in a temporal manner. However, it may be relevant to note that the messages in this case were very short - each of the messages from followers was only a few sentences in length. Perhaps time would serve as a better differentiator if the issues were more complex. In addition, the leaders were likely not particularly invested in the fictional issues presented in the scenarios. This may have led leaders to rely more on heuristics relative to deliberate processing. Future research may increase the relevance level of the issues to leaders.

This dissertation contributes to the literature on decision-making by showing the importance of the social context of taking advice. As noted by Bonaccio and Dalal (2006), most of the work in this area ignores the social implications of the relationship between the person giving the advice and the person receiving it. In fact, most empirical work assumes that the advisee and the adviser are complete strangers. However, in a work situation, it is likely that information is not coming from people unknown to the receiver. Most leaders are processing signals from a multitude of sources – and in most cases, each sender will come with a history. The findings of this study show that leaders do not disregard all past experience or knowledge of the message sender when determining how to respond.

This dissertation may be the only study that empirically tests how regulatory focus influences leader attention and decision-making. Results did not show that regulatory focus moderates the relationship between voice and leader outcomes. Despite the nonsignificant results, this may be an important early step in bringing regulatory focus to the leadership literature. Kark and Van Dijk (2007) have developed a conceptual framework that suggests that the leader's chronic regulatory focus will predict leader behavior and prime the follower's situational regulatory focus. The only other empirical test of the role of regulatory focus in the leadership process is the study by Neubert et al. (2008) that investigated how followers' regulatory focus mediated the influence of

leadership style on employee behavior . The current study seems to combine aspects of both of these initiatives.

## 5.7 Practical Contribution

When leaders gain a better understanding of how their attention is affected by followers, it may be possible to consciously manage the process. For example, if leaders find that certain employees are not being heard, they can make efforts to increase attention to neglected followers or they can institute other methods to solicit input from them.

Alternatively, if leaders realize that they are granting some followers more notice than is appropriate, they can take steps to ensure this attention is being granted in ways that are more advantageous to the organization. Overall, this study can help leaders understand how their relationships with their followers can both help and hinder change.

Organizations and the leaders within them can consider the results of this study and what it means to their focus on threats or opportunities. Perhaps leaders can take steps to better manage their responses to both types of messages. In addition, followers may benefit by learning what types of messages gain the most positive responses from leaders. If leaders generally respond better to promotive messages, followers can choose to frame suggestions accordingly.

If we can understand the conditions that both foster and impair the transmission of information upwards in an organization, leaders may improve their ability to take advantage of the valuable data available from the followers at the front-line. If we can increase the quality of the data used to make a decision, outcomes may improve. In addition, a broad range of stakeholders may benefit from the development of a work environment that values the input from all levels of the organization.

Leaders are under a lot of pressure. Change management is a primary leadership task in today's fast-moving business environment (By, 2005). It is important to help leaders understand what happens in the change process so they can increase the number of successful implementations and bolster the odds of sustaining improvements over time. This will profit organizations and strengthen our economy.

A change that does not ‘stick’ is costly to the organization in many ways. The cost of the change itself is only the beginning, be it a new technology or a process. In the initial stages, the process of deciding on a change can require a significant investment.

Decision-makers have to research the options and possible outcomes, and weigh the available choices. Once the decision on the change initiative has been made, communication introducing the change and employee training to implement the change involve time, effort, and sometimes outside expertise (e.g., consultants or trainers).

A change initiative can represent a significant amount of time, money, and even reputation. When individuals are associated with a particular initiative and the change does not succeed as expected, they can lose credibility and motivation. A failed change can also affect future initiatives. Specifically, employees may learn that changes are sometimes transitory, even when they are marketed as permanent. Employees often learn that proposed changes may not be commitment-worthy. Thus, cynicism increases and employees become less motivated to take on the effort and the growing pains that are required with any major modification. The next time a change is attempted, the employees play a ‘wait and see’ game. They hesitate to invest because their efforts may be for naught. Each failed initiative then cements this lesson further. This research will give leaders and followers more tools to help increase the success of change initiatives.

## 5.8 Future Research

A broader consideration of non-follower-specific outcomes may be viewed as a natural and beneficial evolution of the voice literature. Future research should continue to explore what happens after a follower gives voice, not only to the follower, but also to other stakeholders. We need to understand how follower voice can influence other important constituents such as: the leader, the team, the organization, and the customer.

Additional empirical work is needed to understand how message type influences organizational outcomes. It would be interesting to vary the stakes involved in the threats and opportunities, and to examine whether it matters to whom the threat or opportunity applies. That is, a leader may respond differently when the threat or opportunity is larger and when it is aimed at the follower, the leader him/herself, the department, the



organization, the industry, the environment, or another subject. In addition, the effect of organizational viability and climate could also be explored in terms of leader preferences for threats versus opportunities. Future research might also look at whether leaders spend more time on certain messages if the situation and/or the messages are lengthier or more difficult to decipher.

This dissertation provides evidence that leaders may be using some sort of peripheral or heuristic processing. It is important to understand when this is an effective strategy and when it is not. And, although this study shows that LMX can be a route to non-central processing, it would be helpful to understand what other relationships or circumstances can lead to this type of disproportionate influence. Future research might explore whether leaders also differentiate between and amongst peers, customers, suppliers, and senior leaders. It would also be interesting to explore if there are particular motivations behind the high LMX influence. We need to understand if leaders think high LMX followers give better advice or if leaders think high LMX followers are more invested in supporting the leaders' interests. Perhaps leaders support the suggestions of high LMX followers because they are worried not doing so will hurt their relationship.

While this study found that leaders were influenced by LMX levels, future research could explore the details of this influence. Leaders were presented with messages from one high LMX follower and one low LMX follower. It is not clear if leaders listen to all high LMX followers or only the highest. Future research can determine how far apart followers need to be in terms of LMX level for there to be a difference in influence levels. There are a number of other questions that could be addressed. If all followers have a high LMX relationship with the leader, will they all be highly influential or is influence a zero-sum game? Do departments whose leaders have developed high LMX relationships only with people who give good advice perform better? Are leaders at higher levels of the organizational hierarchy more likely to be influenced by followers? This seems to be a particularly intriguing question, because at more senior levels of management, leaders are more likely to have direct reports who are from different functional areas (e.g. vice-president in charge of accounting, human resources, and

facilities). Thus, leaders are not likely to be knowledgeable across all of the functions, and they may be even more likely to rely on their expert followers for advice.

## 5.9 Conclusion

This study is important because it connects several literatures in compelling ways. It takes the 'next step' in a number of directions. It examines what happens after followers voice an idea. It explores the consequences of a signal grabbing the attention of a leader. It not only looks at how followers affect leaders, it also includes a consideration of how the relationship between the two matters.

To further our exploration of leadership, it is not enough to look at leaders. It is not even enough to add followers into the equation. Either in isolation is only part of the story. This research contributes to the idea that leaders and followers are not really as separate as we have made them out to be. To truly understand the essence of leadership, we have to begin by accepting the complexity of leaders and followers together.

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## Appendices

### 6 Appendix A: In-basket Voice and Decision Tasks

#### 6.1.1 Instructions for Voice Task for Followers

Employees are often able to influence the decisions of leaders. Your task is to consider some common managerial scenarios and decide whether to attempt to influence the decision of your leader. Your leader will be given the opportunity to read messages from some employees. The leaders will know the name of the person who sent the message.

All participants in this study will be entered into a draw to win a prize worth \$100. If your leader chooses to read and act on YOUR recommendations, you will receive additional opportunities to be entered into a draw to win the prize. If you make recommendations that your leader chooses not to read and/or act on, you will receive fewer chances in the draw to win a prize.

It is critical that you attempt to complete the process as you would in a real-life work situation.

#### 6.1.2 In-basket Voice Task #1 (for followers)

##### **INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT**

Your department will soon be implementing a new software system. Senior leaders have let your leader know that as the pilot group, it is important that this initial implementation go smoothly and on schedule. If your leader makes good decisions, his/her reputation will likely improve – this is a significant opportunity. If your leader makes poor decisions, his/her reputation will likely suffer – this is a significant danger.

Head Office has provided a list of guidelines for employees who will be using the new software. Unfortunately, your leader does not have time to read the guidelines before

they are released to everyone in your department. Your leader has asked you to read the guidelines, and you have done so and noticed some ways they could be improved. If a change to the guideline is implemented, this will cause a significant delay to the implementation schedule. However, if the guidelines go out before they are fully accurate, there could be negative or less-than-ideal outcomes over time. You have the opportunity to comment on ways to change the guidelines. Your leader will be given the opportunity to hear messages from some employees in order to improve his/her decision. For the leader to make the best decisions, feedback from employees is important. However, your leader may not have time to read all of the messages from all of his/her employees.

You have two thoughts on the software guidelines:

### **MESSAGES**

(PROMOTIVE) Message 1: Guideline #1 is not as clear as it could be. It needs to be changed if we are to be able to collect some additional useful data. If we change it, we will be better off. You think Guideline #1 should be rewritten.

(PROHIBITIVE) Message 2: Guideline #2 is not as clear as it could be. It needs to be changed or else the company may lose some useful data. If we do not change it, we will be worse off. You think Guideline #2 should be rewritten.

### **INDICATE WHICH TYPE OF VOICE TO SEND, IF ANY**

Now you have to choose what to recommend to your leader. Your options are: message #1, message #2, or no recommendation.

You have 100 points to distribute across these options, although you do not have to use all 100 points. An option to which you are fully and solely committed should receive 100 points (while the others receive 0 points). An option to which you are not committed at all would receive 0 points, with varying amounts given to options to which there is partial commitment.

### 6.1.3 Instructions for Decision Task for Leaders

Leaders are often required to make decisions. This task will ask you to think through common managerial scenarios. **It is critical that you attempt to complete the process as you would in a real-life work situation.** Please read each message very carefully.

### 6.1.4 In-basket Decision Task #1 (for leaders)

#### **INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT**

##### Screen 1

Your department will soon be implementing a new software system. Senior leaders have let you know that as the pilot group, it is important that this initial implementation go smoothly and on schedule. If you do a good job on this project, your reputation will likely improve – this is a significant opportunity. If you do a poor job, your reputation will suffer – this is a significant danger.

Head Office has provided a list of guidelines for employees who will be using the new software. Unfortunately, you do not have time to read the guidelines yourself before they are released to everyone. If you decide to recommend any changes to these guidelines, this will cause a significant delay to the implementation schedule. However, if the guidelines go out before they are fully accurate, the change implementation could be hurt. You may have to justify your decisions. Some of your employees have reviewed the guidelines and they have been given the opportunity to comment on them. They may have information from the front lines that you do not have.

Before you make your decision you will have the option to consider different types of messages sent by one or two randomly chosen employees. The information they send may be important to make a good decision. Since you hold the authority to make this decision, you can choose whether or not to be influenced by the recommendations. Your task is to make a good decision with the limited data you have available.

Followers who are able to influence you will be entered into a draw to win a prize worth \$100.

**INDICATE INTEREST BY ASSIGNING POINTS TO EMPLOYEES AND/OR  
TYPE OF VOICE**

Screen 2

Here are your options (TWO OFFERED)\*:

\_\_\_\_\_ (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has some information about a possible opportunity that could make the work situation better (THIS IS PROMOTIVE VOICE)

\_\_\_\_\_ (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has some information about a possible threat that could make the work situation worse (THIS IS PROHIBITIVE VOICE)

\_\_\_\_\_ (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has another piece of information about a possible opportunity that could make the work situation better (THIS IS THE SECOND PROMOTIVE VOICE MESSAGE WHEN THE FIRST MESSAGE IS PROMOTIVE ALSO)

\_\_\_\_\_ (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has another piece of information about a possible threat that could make the work situation worse (THIS IS THE SECOND PROHIBITIVE VOICE MESSAGE WHEN THE FIRST MESSAGE IS PROHIBITIVE ALSO)

*\*Note: The names of the employees were different for each leader based on their LMX ratings. There were six different combinations of two options: (1) high LMX follower offering promotive voice; same high LMX follower offering prohibitive voice; (2) low LMX follower offering promotive voice; same low LMX follower offering prohibitive voice; (3) low LMX follower offering promotive voice; high LMX follower offering promotive voice; (4) low LMX follower offering prohibitive voice; high LMX follower offering prohibitive voice; (5) high LMX follower offering promotive voice; low LMX follower offering prohibitive voice; (6) high LMX follower offering prohibitive voice; and low LMX follower offering promotive voice.*

In the space provided, indicate your interest in each of these options. You can do this by distributing 100 points across these options with those of the highest interest to you receiving the most points. You can give each option a number of points ranging from 0 to 100, as long as the maximum amount of points spread across the options is 100 or less. For example, all 100 points could be given to one option with 0 points given to the other; each option could receive 50 points; one option could receive 75 points while the other receives 25 points; or some other combination. You do not need to use all 100 points or even any of them. In general, a choice that generates very high interest should receive 75+ points, a choice that generates high interest should receive between 50 and 74 points, a choice that generates moderate interest should receive between 26 and 49 points, and a choice that generates little or no interest should receive between 0 and 25 points. However, it is understood that point distribution to one choice may be directly influenced by your interest in the other choice.

### **INSTRUCTIONS ON READING OF MESSAGES**

Screen 3

Now you will be given the opportunity to see some messages sent to you by one or two of your employees. Once you push the 'NEXT' button, you will have a maximum of two minutes to review the messages before you are asked to make your final decision.

### **INDICATE INTEREST BY SPENDING TIME READING MESSAGES**

Screen 4

*Leaders clicked on one or both of the following lines to access a message\*:*

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has some information about a possible opportunity that could make the work situation better (THIS IS PROMOTIVE VOICE)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Guideline #1 is not as clear as it should be. It needs to be



changed if we are to be able to collect some additional useful data. If we change it, this will cause us to be better off. I think Guideline #1 should be rewritten.

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has some information about a possible threat that could make the work situation worse (THIS IS PROHIBITIVE VOICE)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Guideline #2 is not as clear as it could be. It needs to be changed or else the company may lose some useful data. We need to change it or this will cause us to be worse off. I think Guideline #2 should be rewritten.

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has another piece of information about a possible opportunity that could make the work situation better (THIS IS THE SECOND PROMOTIVE VOICE MESSAGE WHEN THE FIRST MESSAGE IS PROMOTIVE ALSO)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Guideline #3 is not as clear as it could be. It needs to be changed so that users will be able to save time compared to the current situation. If we change it, this will cause us to be better off. I think Guideline #3 should be rewritten.

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has another piece of information about a possible threat that could make the work situation worse (THIS IS THE SECOND PROHIBITIVE VOICE MESSAGE WHEN THE FIRST MESSAGE IS PROHIBITIVE ALSO)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Guideline #4 is not as clear as it could be. It needs to be changed so that users will be less able to waste time compared to the current situation. We need to change it or this will cause us to be worse off. I think Guideline #4 should be rewritten.

\*NOTE: ONLY TWO OPTIONS WERE OFFERED. WHEN THE OPTIONS WERE FROM DIFFERENT FOLLOWERS, THE OPTIONS WERE MATCHED BY ISSUE (E.G. OPTIONS 1 AND 2 GO TOGETHER; OPTIONS 3 AND 4 GO TOGETHER)

**INDICATE DECISION BY ASSIGNING POINTS TO RECOMMENDATIONS BY EMPLOYEES OR NOT**

Screen 5

Again you have 100 points to distribute across these options. An option to which you are fully and solely committed should receive 100 points (while the others receive 0 points). An option to which you are not committed at all would receive 0 points, with varying amounts given to options to which there is partial commitment.

You must use your best judgment in deciding whether or not to be swayed by your employee(s). If you decide to rewrite any or all of the guidelines, this will cause a delay to the program. If you do not make changes, the outcomes of the change implementation may be affected. The employee(s) who affect your decision may be rewarded by the researchers.

Now it is time to make a decision. You have three options:

\_\_\_\_\_ Rewrite Guideline #(1/2/3 OR 4) as per (HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE)

\_\_\_\_\_ Rewrite Guideline #(1/2/3 OR 4) as per (HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE)

\_\_\_\_\_ Leave the guidelines unchanged.

**6.1.5 In-basket Voice Task #2 (for followers)**

**INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT**

Your department will soon be implementing a new software system. Senior leaders have let your leader know that as the pilot group, it is important that this initial implementation

go smoothly and on schedule. If your leader makes good decisions, his/her reputation will likely improve – this is a significant opportunity. If your leader makes poor decisions, his/her reputation will likely suffer – this is a significant danger.

Head Office has outlined the standard software package that will be implemented. They have also released a description of optional feature packages that are available.

Unfortunately, your leader does not have time to research the optional feature packages. Your leader has asked you to look into these features, and you have done so. Every feature that is added will be an additional cost to the company and something Head Office will want your leader to justify. You have the opportunity to recommend which optional features should be bought. Your leader will be given the opportunity to hear messages from some employees in order to improve his/her decision. For the leader to make the best decisions, feedback from employees is important. However, your leader may not have time to read all of the messages from all of his/her employees.

You have two thoughts on the optional features:

## **MESSAGES**

(PROMOTIVE) Message #1: Optional feature #1 will make work processes simpler. You think that this will make recruiting easier when we need to hire more people. If we add this feature, we will be better off. You think we should buy optional feature #1.

(PROHIBITIVE) Message #2: Optional feature #2 will make work processes simpler. You think this will make our current employees less likely to leave, so we will not need to recruit replacements. If we do not add this feature, we will be worse off. You think we should buy optional feature #2.

## **INDICATE WHICH TYPE OF VOICE TO SEND, IF ANY**

Now you have to choose what to recommend to your leader. Your options are: message #1, message #2, or no recommendation.

You have 100 points to distribute across these options, although you do not have to use all 100 points. An option to which you are fully and solely committed should receive 100 points (while the others receive 0 points). An option to which you are not committed at all would receive 0 points, with varying amounts given to options to which there is partial commitment.

### 6.1.6 In-basket Decision Task #2 (for leaders)

#### **INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT**

##### Screen 1

Your department will soon be implementing a new software system. Senior leaders have let you know that as the pilot group, it is important that this initial implementation go smoothly and on schedule. If you do a good job on this project, your reputation will likely improve – this is a significant opportunity. If you do a poor job, your reputation will suffer – this is a significant danger.

Head Office has outlined the standard software package that will be implemented. They have also released a description of optional features that are available. Unfortunately, you do not have time to research these optional features yourself. If you recommend adding any optional features, you will have to justify this cost to Head Office. If you do not add some features until after the initial implementation, you will need to justify to Head Office why this was not done earlier. Some of your employees have researched these additional feature packages and they have been given the opportunity to comment on them. They may have information from the front lines that you do not have.

Before you make your decision you will have the option to consider different types of messages sent by one or two randomly chosen employees. The information they send may be important to make a good decision. Since you hold the authority to make this decision, you can choose whether or not to be influenced by the recommendations. Your task is to make a good decision with the limited data you have available.

Followers who are able to influence you will be entered into a draw to win a prize worth \$100.

**INDICATE INTEREST BY ASSIGNING POINTS TO EMPLOYEES AND/OR TYPE OF VOICE**

Screen 2 – SAME AS IN-BASKET - DECISION TASK #1

**INSTRUCTIONS ON READING OF MESSAGES**

Screen 3 - SAME AS IN-BASKET - DECISION TASK #1

**INDICATE INTEREST BY SPENDING TIME READING MESSAGES**

Screen 4

*Leaders were able to click on each of the following lines to access a message\*:*

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has some information about a possible opportunity that could make the work situation better (THIS IS PROMOTIVE VOICE)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Optional feature #1 will make work processes simpler. I think this will make recruiting easier when we need to hire more people. If we add it, this will cause us to be better off. I think we should add optional feature #1.

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has some information about a possible threat that could make the work situation worse (THIS IS PROHIBITIVE VOICE)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Optional feature #2 will make work processes simpler. I think this will make our current employees less likely to leave, so we will not need to recruit replacements. If we do not add it, we will be worse off. I think we should add optional feature #2.

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has another piece of information about a possible opportunity that could make the work situation better (THIS IS THE SECOND PROMOTIVE VOICE MESSAGE WHEN THE FIRST MESSAGE IS PROMOTIVE ALSO)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Optional feature #3 will make work processes simpler. I think this will increase our productivity which will make our customers even more loyal to us. If we add it, this will cause us to be better off. I think we should add optional feature #3.

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has another piece of information about a possible threat that could make the work situation worse (THIS IS THE SECOND PROHIBITIVE VOICE MESSAGE WHEN THE FIRST MESSAGE IS PROHIBITIVE ALSO)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Optional feature #4 will make work processes simpler. I think this help ensure that the system does not crash which would cause us to lose customers. If we do not add it, we will be worse off. I think we should add optional feature #4.

\*NOTE: ONLY TWO OPTIONS WERE OFFERED. WHEN THE OPTIONS WERE FROM DIFFERENT FOLLOWERS, THE OPTIONS WERE MATCHED BY ISSUE (E.G. OPTIONS 1 AND 2 GO TOGETHER; OPTIONS 3 AND 4 GO TOGETHER)

**INDICATE DECISION BY ASSIGNING POINTS TO RECOMMENDATIONS BY EMPLOYEES OR NOT**

Screen 5

Again you have 100 points to distribute across these options. An option to which you are fully and solely committed should receive 100 points (while the others receive 0 points). An option to which you are not committed at all would receive 0 points, with varying amounts given to options to which there is partial commitment.

You must use your best judgment in deciding whether or not to be swayed by your employee(s). If you decide to buy one or more of the optional features, you may be asked to justify this decision. If you do not buy an optional feature that is later considered desirable, you may be asked to justify this decision. The employee(s) who affect your decision may be rewarded by the researchers.

Now it is time to make a decision. You have three options:

- \_\_\_\_\_ Buy optional feature #(1/2/3 OR 4) as per (HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Buy optional feature #(1/2/3 OR 4) as per (HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Do not buy any of the optional features at this time.

**6.1.7 In-basket Voice Task #3 (for followers)**

**INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT**

Your department will soon be implementing a new software system. Senior leaders have let your leader know that as the pilot group, it is important that this initial implementation go smoothly and on schedule. If your leader makes good decisions, his/her reputation will likely improve – this is a significant opportunity. If your leader makes poor decisions, his/her reputation will likely suffer – this is a significant danger.

Committees are being formed to write policies and procedures that will support the new software implementation, and your leader will be leading one of them. It is important these committees are effective in their tasks. There will be a manager's meeting to decide who will serve on which committees. At this meeting your leader can request certain employees to serve on the committee and/or request that certain employees do not serve on the committee. Each request may have to be justified. If your leader is too choosy about the members of the committee, other managers may become annoyed. If the best people are not chosen to serve on the committee, the output of the committee may be compromised. You have the opportunity to recommend which employees should serve on the committee. Your leader will be given the opportunity to hear messages from some employees in order to improve his/her decision. For the leader to make the best decisions, feedback from employees is important. However, your leader may not have time to read all of the messages from all of his/her employees.

You have two thoughts on the employees who should serve on the committee:

### **MESSAGES**

(PROMOTIVE) Message #1: Employee A will help this committee work faster than average. You think adding this person to the committee will keep everyone focused on the task. Adding this person will make the committee better off. You think your leader should add Employee A to the committee.

(PROHIBITIVE) Message #2: Employee B will cause this committee to work slower than average. You think adding this person to the committee will stop people from being focused on the task. Adding this person will make the committee worse off. You think your leader should ensure Employee B is not on the committee.

### **INDICATE WHICH TYPE OF VOICE TO SEND, IF ANY**

Now you have to choose what to recommend to your leader. Your options are: message #1, message #2, or no recommendation.



You have 100 points to distribute across these options, although you do not have to use all 100 points. An option to which you are fully and solely committed should receive 100 points (while the others receive 0 points). An option to which you are not committed at all would receive 0 points, with varying amounts given to options to which there is partial commitment.

### 6.1.8 In-basket Decision Task #3 (for leaders)

#### **INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT**

##### Screen 1

Your department will soon be implementing a new software system. Senior leaders have let you know that as the pilot group, it is important that this initial implementation go smoothly and on schedule. If you do a good job on this project, your reputation will likely improve – this is a significant opportunity. If you do a poor job, your reputation will suffer – this is a significant danger.

Committees are being formed to write policies and procedures that will support the new software implementation, and you will be leading one of them. It is important these committees are effective in their tasks. There will be a manager's meeting to decide who will serve on which committees. At this meeting you can request certain employees to serve on your committee and/or request that certain employees do not serve on your committee. Each request you make may need to be justified. If you are too choosy about the members of your committee, other managers may become annoyed with you. If you do not choose the best people to serve on your committee, the output of the committee may be compromised. Your employees know the potential members of the committee, and they have sent messages regarding committee makeup. They may have information from the front lines that you do not have.

Before you make your decision you will have the option to consider different types of messages sent by one or two randomly chosen employees. The information they send may be important to make a good decision. Since you hold the authority to make this

decision, you can choose whether or not to be influenced by the recommendations. Your task is to make a good decision with the limited data you have available.

Followers who are able to influence you will be entered into a draw to win a prize worth \$100.

**INDICATE INTEREST BY ASSIGNING POINTS TO EMPLOYEES AND/OR  
TYPE OF VOICE**

Screen 2 – SAME AS IN-BASKET - DECISION TASK #1

**INSTRUCTIONS ON READING OF MESSAGES**

Screen 3 - SAME AS IN-BASKET - DECISION TASK #1

**INDICATE INTEREST BY SPENDING TIME READING MESSAGES**

Screen 4

*Leaders were able to click on each of the following lines to access a message\*:*

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has some information about a possible opportunity that could make the work situation better (THIS IS PROMOTIVE VOICE)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Employee A will help this committee work faster than average. I think adding this person to the committee will keep everyone focused on the task. If we add this person, we will be better off. I think you should add Employee A to the committee.

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has some information about a possible threat that could make the work situation worse (THIS IS PROHIBITIVE VOICE)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Employee B will cause this committee to work slower than average. I think adding this person to the committee will stop people from being focused on the task. If we add this person, we will be worse off. I think you should ensure Employee B is not on the committee.

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has another piece of information about a possible opportunity that could make the work situation better (THIS IS THE SECOND PROMOTIVE VOICE MESSAGE WHEN THE FIRST MESSAGE IS PROMOTIVE ALSO)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Employee C will cause this committee to have well-written policies. I think adding this person to the committee will improve the overall quality of the writing on the finished product. If we add this person, we will be better off. I think you should add Employee C to the committee.

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has another piece of information about a possible threat that could make the work situation worse (THIS IS THE SECOND PROHIBITIVE VOICE MESSAGE WHEN THE FIRST MESSAGE IS PROHIBITIVE ALSO)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Employee D will cause this committee to have poorly written policies. I think adding this person to the committee will lower the overall quality of the writing on the finished product. If we add this person, we will be worse off. I think you should ensure Employee D is not on the committee.

\*NOTE: ONLY TWO OPTIONS WERE OFFERED. WHEN THE OPTIONS WERE FROM DIFFERENT FOLLOWERS, THE OPTIONS GIVEN WERE MATCHED BY ISSUE (E.G. OPTIONS 1 AND 2 GO TOGETHER; OPTIONS 3 AND 4 GO TOGETHER)

## **INDICATE DECISION BY ASSIGNING POINTS TO RECOMMENDATIONS BY EMPLOYEES OR NOT**

### Screen 5

Again you have 100 points to distribute across these options. An option to which you are fully and solely committed should receive 100 points (while the others receive 0 points). An option to which you are not committed at all would receive 0 points, with varying amounts given to options to which there is partial commitment.

You must use your best judgment in deciding whether or not to be swayed by your employee(s). If you decide to request that certain employees are on your committee or not on your committee, you may be asked to justify this decision. The employees who affect your decision may be rewarded by the researchers.

Now it is time to make a decision. You have three options:

\_\_\_\_\_ Request that Employee (A or C) is on your committee as per (HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE)

\_\_\_\_\_ Request that Employee (B or D) is not on your committee as per (HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE)

\_\_\_\_\_ Do not express a preference for any particular committee members.

### **6.1.9 In-basket Voice Task #4 (for followers)**

#### **INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT**

Your department will soon be implementing a new software system. Senior leaders have let your leader know that as the pilot group, it is important that this initial implementation go smoothly and on schedule. If your leader makes good decisions, his/her reputation will likely improve – this is a significant opportunity. If your leader makes poor decisions, his/her reputation will likely suffer – this is a significant danger.

Some other departments in the organization have experience with similar software implementation programs. Your leader must determine how much influence these other departments should have on your implementation. Your leader is able to formally request help from these other departments or formally request that they do not interfere. Your leader may need to justify these decisions. You have the opportunity to recommend which Departments should be asked for help and which Departments should be asked to not help. Your leader will be given the opportunity to hear messages from some employees in order to improve his/her decision. For the leader to make the best decisions, feedback from employees is important. However, your leader may not have time to read all of the messages from all of his/her employees.

You have two thoughts on the Departments and their ability to help:

### **MESSAGES**

(PROMOTIVE) Message #1: Department A has information that could help us. You think if we ask the members of Department A questions as we go through this, we will be able to get even more of the benefits we are hoping to achieve from this implementation. If we get help from this department, we will be better off. You think your leader should ask Department A to help us.

(PROHIBITIVE) Message #2: Department B has information that could mess us up. You think we should not be influenced by their experience because it is so dissimilar, otherwise we will lose many of the benefits we are hoping to achieve from this implementation. If we get help from this department, we will be worse off. You think your leader should ask that Department B does not help us.

### **INDICATE WHICH TYPE OF VOICE TO SEND, IF ANY**

Now you have to choose what to recommend to your leader. Your options are: message #1, message #2, or no recommendation.

You have 100 points to distribute across these options, although you do not have to use all 100 points. An option to which you are fully and solely committed should receive 100

points (while the others receive 0 points). An option to which you are not committed at all would receive 0 points, with varying amounts given to options to which there is partial commitment.

#### 6.1.10 In-basket Decision Task #4 (for leaders)

##### **INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT**

###### Screen 1

Your department will soon be implementing a new software system. Senior leaders have let you know that as the pilot group, it is important that this initial implementation go smoothly and on schedule. If you do a good job on this project, your reputation will likely improve – this is a significant opportunity. If you do a poor job, your reputation will suffer – this is a significant danger.

Some other departments in the organization have experience with similar software implementation processes. You have to determine how much influence these other departments should have on your employees. If you want help from another department, or alternately, if you want another department to not get involved, it would be appropriate for you to formally address this request with the particular department's manager beforehand. In addition, your boss may ask you to justify why you did or did not ask for help or no interference from these other departments. Some of your employees have looked into the experience of the other departments, and they have sent messages regarding the utility of help from specific departments. They may have information from the front lines that you do not have.

Before you make your decision you will have the option to consider different types of messages sent by one or two randomly chosen employees. The information they send may be important to make a good decision. Since you hold the authority to make this decision, you can choose whether or not to be influenced by the recommendations. Your task is to make a good decision with the limited data you have available.

Followers who are able to influence you will be entered into a draw to win a prize worth \$100.

**INDICATE INTEREST BY ASSIGNING POINTS TO EMPLOYEES AND/OR TYPE OF VOICE**

Screen 2 – SAME AS IN-BASKET - DECISION TASK #1

**INSTRUCTIONS ON READING OF MESSAGES**

Screen 3 - SAME AS IN-BASKET - DECISION TASK #1

**INDICATE INTEREST BY SPENDING TIME READING MESSAGES**

Screen 4

*Leaders were able to click on each of the following lines to access a message\*:*

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has some information about a possible opportunity that could make the work situation better (THIS IS PROMOTIVE VOICE)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Department A has information that could help us. I think if we ask the members of Department A questions as we go through this, we will be able to get even more of the benefits we are hoping to achieve from this implementation. If we get help from this department, we will be better off. I think you should ask Department A to help us.

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has some information about a possible threat that could make the work situation worse (THIS IS PROHIBITIVE VOICE)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Department B has information that could mess us up. I think we should not be influenced by their experience because it is so dissimilar, otherwise

we will lose many of the benefits we are hoping to achieve from this implementation. If we get help from this department, we will be worse off. I think you should ask that Department B does not help us.

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has another piece of information about a possible opportunity that could make the work situation better (THIS IS THE SECOND PROMOTIVE VOICE MESSAGE WHEN THE FIRST MESSAGE IS PROMOTIVE ALSO)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Department C has some documented procedures that could make us more efficient with the new software. I think if we ask the members of Department C to share their documentation as we go through this, we will be able to get even more of the benefits we are hoping to achieve from this implementation. If we get help from this department, we will be better off. I think you should ask Department C to help us.

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has another piece of information about a possible threat that could make the work situation worse (THIS IS THE SECOND PROHIBITIVE VOICE MESSAGE WHEN THE FIRST MESSAGE IS PROHIBITIVE ALSO)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Department D has some documented procedures that could make us less efficient with the new software. I think we should not be influenced by their processes because our systems are so dissimilar, otherwise we will lose many of the benefits we are hoping to achieve from this implementation. If we get help from this department, we will be worse off. I think you should ask that Department D does not help us.

\*NOTE: ONLY TWO OPTIONS WERE OFFERED. WHEN THE OPTIONS WERE FROM DIFFERENT FOLLOWERS, THE OPTIONS WERE MATCHED BY ISSUE (E.G. OPTIONS 1 AND 2 GO TOGETHER; OPTIONS 3 AND 4 GO TOGETHER)



## **INDICATE DECISION BY ASSIGNING POINTS TO RECOMMENDATIONS BY EMPLOYEES OR NOT**

### Screen 5

Again you have 100 points to distribute across these options. An option to which you are fully and solely committed should receive 100 points (while the others receive 0 points). An option to which you are not committed at all would receive 0 points, with varying amounts given to options to which there is partial commitment.

You must use your best judgment in deciding whether or not to be swayed by your employee(s). If you decide to request that certain departments offer help or that certain departments do not help, you may be asked to justify this decision. The employees who affect your decision may be rewarded by the researchers.

Now it is time to make a decision. You have three options:

\_\_\_\_\_ Request that Department (A or C) offers assistance with the implementation (HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE)

\_\_\_\_\_ Request that Department (B or D) does not offer assistance with the implementation (HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE)

\_\_\_\_\_ Do not express a preference for help or no help from any department

### 6.1.11 In-basket Voice Task #5 (for followers)

#### **INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT**

Your department will soon be implementing a new software system. Senior leaders have let your leader know that as the pilot group, it is important that this initial implementation go smoothly and on schedule. If your leader makes good decisions, his/her reputation will likely improve – this is a significant opportunity. If your leader makes poor decisions, his/her reputation will likely suffer – this is a significant danger.

Your department will have a weekly meeting to keep the implementation on track. Most of the agenda has been set, but there may be room for additional agenda items. Every item that is on the agenda will take time to cover, so it is important to only put on those items that matter most. Your leader may need to justify the decisions about what to put on the agenda. You have the opportunity to recommend additional items that should go on the agenda. Your leader will be given the opportunity to hear messages from some employees in order to improve his/her decision. For the leader to make the best decisions, feedback from employees is important. However, your leader may not have time to read all of the messages from all of his/her employees.

You have two thoughts on what should be added to the agenda:

### **MESSAGES**

(PROMOTIVE) Message #1: Part of the meeting should be devoted to improvement opportunities that increase productivity. This would be a time for us to focus on practices that can let us achieve the productivity benefits we expect from this software implementation. If we put this item on the agenda, we can help ourselves to be better off. You think you should put this item on the agenda.

(PROHIBITIVE) Message #2: Part of the meeting should be devoted to possible threats to productivity. This would be a time for us to focus on obstacles that can stop us from achieving the productivity benefits we expect from this implementation. If we put this item on the agenda, we can stop ourselves from being worse off. You think we should put this item on the agenda.

### **INDICATE WHICH TYPE OF VOICE TO SEND, IF ANY**

Now you have to choose what to recommend to your leader. Your options are: message #1, message #2, or no recommendation.

You have 100 points to distribute across these options, although you do not have to use all 100 points. An option to which you are fully and solely committed should receive 100 points (while the others receive 0 points). An option to which you are not committed at

all would receive 0 points, with varying amounts given to options to which there is partial commitment.

### 6.1.12 In-basket Decision Task #5 (for leaders)

#### **INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT**

##### Screen 1

Your department will soon be implementing a new software system. Senior leaders have let you know that as the pilot group, it is important that this initial implementation go smoothly and on schedule. If you do a good job on this project, your reputation will likely improve – this is a significant opportunity. If you do a poor job, your reputation will suffer – this is a significant danger.

You plan on having a weekly meeting with everyone in your department to keep the implementation on track. You have set most of the agenda, but some of your employees have suggested additions. Every item that is on the agenda will take time to cover, so it is important to only put on those items that matter most. You may have to justify to your boss why you added some items and did not add others. Some of your employees have sent messages regarding what they think should be added to the agenda. They may have information from the front lines that you do not have.

Before you make your decision you will have the option to consider different types of messages sent by one or two randomly chosen employees. The information they send may be important to make a good decision. Since you hold the authority to make this decision, you can choose whether or not to be influenced by the recommendations. Your task is to make a good decision with the limited data you have available.

Followers who are able to influence you will be entered into a draw to win a prize worth \$100.

#### **INDICATE INTEREST BY ASSIGNING POINTS TO EMPLOYEES AND/OR TYPE OF VOICE**

Screen 2 – SAME AS IN-BASKET - DECISION TASK #1

**INSTRUCTIONS ON READING OF MESSAGES**

Screen 3 - SAME AS IN-BASKET - DECISION TASK #1

**INDICATE INTEREST BY SPENDING TIME READING MESSAGES**

Screen 4

*Leaders were able to click on each of the following lines to access a message\*:*

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has some information about a possible opportunity that could make the work situation better (THIS IS PROMOTIVE VOICE)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Part of the meeting should be devoted to improvement opportunities that increase productivity. This would be a time for us to focus on practices that can let us achieve the productivity benefits we expect from this software implementation. If we put this item on the agenda, we can help ourselves to be better off. I think you should put this item on the agenda.

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has some information about a possible threat that could make the work situation worse (THIS IS PROHIBITIVE VOICE)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Part of the meeting should be devoted to possible threats to productivity. This would be a time for us to focus on obstacles that can stop us from achieving the productivity benefits we expect from this implementation. If we put this item on the agenda, we can stop ourselves from being worse off. I think we should put this item on the agenda.

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has another piece of information about a possible opportunity that could make the work situation better (THIS IS THE SECOND PROMOTIVE VOICE MESSAGE WHEN THE FIRST MESSAGE IS PROMOTIVE ALSO)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Part of the meeting should be devoted to improvement opportunities that increase employee satisfaction. This would be a time for us to focus on practices that can let us achieve the employee satisfaction benefits we expect from this software implementation. If we put this item on the agenda, we can help ourselves to be better off. I think you should put this item on the agenda.

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has another piece of information about a possible threat that could make the work situation worse (THIS IS THE SECOND PROHIBITIVE VOICE MESSAGE WHEN THE FIRST MESSAGE IS PROHIBITIVE ALSO)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Part of the meeting should be devoted to possible threats to employee satisfaction. This would be a time for us to focus on obstacles that can stop us from achieving the employee satisfaction benefits we expect from this implementation. If we put this item on the agenda, we can stop ourselves from being worse off. I think we should put this item on the agenda.

\*NOTE: ONLY TWO OPTIONS WERE OFFERED. WHEN THE OPTIONS WERE FROM DIFFERENT FOLLOWERS, THE OPTIONS WERE MATCHED BY ISSUE (E.G. OPTIONS 1 AND 2 GO TOGETHER; OPTIONS 3 AND 4 GO TOGETHER)

**INDICATE DECISION BY ASSIGNING POINTS TO RECOMMENDATIONS BY EMPLOYEES OR NOT**

Again you have 100 points to distribute across these options. An option to which you are fully and solely committed should receive 100 points (while the others receive 0 points). An option to which you are not committed at all would receive 0 points, with varying amounts given to options to which there is partial commitment.

You must use your best judgment in deciding whether or not to be swayed by your employee(s). If you decide to add certain items to the agenda, you may be asked to justify this decision. The employee(s) who affect your decision may be rewarded by the researchers.

Now it is time to make a decision. You have three options:

\_\_\_\_\_ Add to the agenda the time to focus on improvement opportunities (TO PRODUCTIVITY OR EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION) as sent by (HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE)

\_\_\_\_\_ Add to the agenda the time to focus on possible threats (TO PRODUCTIVITY OR EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION) as sent by (HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE)

\_\_\_\_\_ Do not add any additional items to the agenda

### 6.1.13 In-basket Voice Task #6 (for followers)

#### **INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT**

Your department will soon be implementing a new software system. Senior leaders have let your leader know that as the pilot group, it is important that this initial implementation go smoothly and on schedule. If your leader makes good decisions, his/her reputation will likely improve – this is a significant opportunity. If your leader makes poor decisions, his/her reputation will likely suffer – this is a significant danger.

Co-workers can influence each other in terms of how to accept this change. It may be appropriate for your leader to speak to some employees directly to ensure that motivation levels are as high as possible. Talking to employees takes time and may stir things up in

unexpected ways. Your leader may need to justify why he/she spoke to some people and not others. You have the opportunity to recommend to whom your leader should speak. Your leader will be given the opportunity to hear messages from some employees in order to improve his/her decision. For the leader to make the best decisions, feedback from employees is important. However, your leader may not have time to read all of the messages from all of his/her employees.

You have two thoughts on the employees to whom your leader should speak:

### **MESSAGES**

(PROMOTIVE) Message #1: Employee L has a lot of influence on the other employees. If this person is on board, the whole implementation will go a lot smoother. You think your leader should try to get Employee L excited about this software. If your leader talks to this person, we will be better off.

(PROHIBITIVE) Message #2: Employee M has a lot of influence on the other employees. If this person is not on board, the whole implementation will suffer. You think the leader should try to get Employee M excited about this software. If the leader does not talk to this person, we will be worse off.

### **INDICATE WHICH TYPE OF VOICE TO SEND, IF ANY**

Now you have to choose what to recommend to your leader. Your options are: message #1, message #2, or no recommendation.

You have 100 points to distribute across these options, although you do not have to use all 100 points. An option to which you are fully and solely committed should receive 100 points (while the others receive 0 points). An option to which you are not committed at all would receive 0 points, with varying amounts given to options to which there is partial commitment.

## **6.1.14 In-basket Decision Task #6 (for leaders)**

### **INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT**

## Screen 1

Your department will soon be implementing a new software system. Senior leaders have let you know that as the pilot group, it is important that this initial implementation go smoothly and on schedule. If you do a good job on this project, your reputation will likely improve – this is a significant opportunity. If you do a poor job, your reputation will suffer – this is a significant danger.

You are aware that co-workers can influence each other in terms of how to accept this change. Some of your employees have suggested that you talk to certain employees to ensure that motivation levels are as high as possible. Talking to employees takes time and may stir things up in unexpected ways. You may have to justify to your boss why you spoke to some people and not others. Some of your employees have sent messages regarding to whom you should speak. They may have information from the front lines that you do not have.

Before you make your decision you will have the option to consider different types of messages sent by one or two randomly chosen employees. The information they send may be important to make a good decision. Since you hold the authority to make this decision, you can choose whether or not to be influenced by the recommendations. Your task is to make a good decision with the limited data you have available.

Followers who are able to influence you will be entered into a draw to win a prize worth \$100.

### **INDICATE INTEREST BY ASSIGNING POINTS TO EMPLOYEES AND/OR TYPE OF VOICE**

Screen 2 – SAME AS IN-BASKET - DECISION TASK #1

### **INSTRUCTIONS ON READING OF MESSAGES**

Screen 3 - SAME AS IN-BASKET - DECISION TASK #1

### **INDICATE INTEREST BY SPENDING TIME READING MESSAGES**



## Screen 4

*Leaders were able to click on each of the following lines to access a message\*:*

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has some information about a possible opportunity that could make the work situation better (THIS IS PROMOTIVE VOICE)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Employee L has a lot of influence on the other employees. If this person is on board, the whole implementation will go a lot smoother. I think you should try to get Employee L excited about this software. If you talk to this person, we will be better off.

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has some information about a possible threat that could make the work situation worse (THIS IS PROHIBITIVE VOICE)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Employee M has a lot of influence on the other employees. If this person is not on board, the whole implementation will suffer. I think you should try to get Employee M excited about this software. If you don't talk to this person, we will be worse off.

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has another piece of information about a possible opportunity that could make the work situation better (THIS IS THE SECOND PROMOTIVE VOICE MESSAGE WHEN THE FIRST MESSAGE IS PROMOTIVE ALSO)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Employee S has a lot of influence on the other employees. This person has already been doing a lot to get people excited about this software. I think you should ask Employee S to keep doing this. If you talk to this person, we will be better off.

- (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE) has another piece of information about a possible threat that could make the work situation worse (THIS IS THE SECOND PROHIBITIVE VOICE MESSAGE WHEN THE FIRST MESSAGE IS PROHIBITIVE ALSO)

*If clicked, this was revealed:* Message from (NAME OF HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE): Employee T has a lot of influence on the other employees. This person has already been doing a lot to get people discouraged about this software. I think you should ask Employee T to stop doing this. If you don't talk to this person, we will be worse off.

\*NOTE: ONLY TWO OPTIONS WERE OFFERED. WHEN THE OPTIONS WERE FROM DIFFERENT FOLLOWERS, THE OPTIONS GIVEN WERE MATCHED BY ISSUE (E.G. OPTIONS 1 AND 2 GO TOGETHER; OPTIONS 3 AND 4 GO TOGETHER)

**INDICATE DECISION BY ASSIGNING POINTS TO RECOMMENDATIONS BY EMPLOYEES OR NOT**

Screen 5

Again you have 100 points to distribute across these options. An option to which you are fully and solely committed should receive 100 points (while the others receive 0 points). An option to which you are not committed at all would receive 0 points, with varying amounts given to options to which there is partial commitment.

You must use your best judgment in deciding whether or not to be swayed by your employee(s). If you decide to add certain items to the agenda, you may be asked to justify this decision. The employee(s) who affect your decision may be rewarded by the researchers.

Now it is time to make a decision. You have three options:

\_\_\_\_\_ Talk to Employee (L or S) as per the message sent by (HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE)

\_\_\_\_\_ Talk to Employee (M or T) as per the message sent by (HIGH OR LOW LMX EMPLOYEE)

\_\_\_\_\_ Do not talk to any employees about this

## 6.2 Appendix B: LMX Measure

(Liden et al., 1993; Scandura & Graen, 1984)

### **Instruction:**

This section asks you to assess the relationship you have with each of your followers. Please specify the follower's name first. Then judge to what extent each statement fits the follower you are describing. Use the following rating scale:

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = somewhat disagree, 4 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = somewhat agree, 6 = agree, 7 = strongly agree.

Follower's Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. Regardless of how much power I have built into my position, I would be personally inclined to use my power to help my subordinate solve problems in his/her work.
2. I would be willing to 'bail out' my subordinate, even at my own expense, if he or she really needed it.
3. I think that I understand my subordinate's problems and needs.
4. I think that I recognize my subordinate's potential.
5. I have enough confidence in my subordinate that I would defend and justify his or her decisions if he or she were not present to do so.
6. I usually let my subordinate know where he or she stands with me.
7. How would you describe your working relationship with your subordinate? (*Although not stated, this was rated as per the LMX-7 scale as described by Graen & Uhl-Bien (1995) - Extremely Ineffective, Worse than average, Average, Better than average, extremely effective*)

## 6.3 Appendix C: Work Regulatory Focus Scale

(Neubert et al., 2008) – measure of situational regulatory focus

### **Instruction:**

Please judge to what extent you agree with the following statements by using the following scale:

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

### **Prevention Focus Subscale**

1. I concentrate on completing my work tasks correctly to increase my job security.
2. At work I focus my attention on completing my assigned responsibilities.
3. Fulfilling my work duties is very important to me.
4. At work, I strive to live up to the responsibilities and duties given to me by others.
5. At work, I am often focused on accomplishing tasks that will support my need for security.
6. I do everything I can to avoid loss at work.
7. Job security is an important factor for me in any job search.
8. I focus my attention on avoiding failure at work.
9. I am very careful to avoid exposing myself to potential losses at work.

**Promotion Focus Subscale**

10. I take chances at work to maximize my goals for advancement.
11. I tend to take risks at work in order to achieve success.
12. If I had an opportunity to participate on a high-risk, high-reward project I would definitely take it.
13. If my job did not allow for advancement, I would likely find a new one.
14. A chance to grow is an important factor for me when looking for a job.
15. I focus on accomplishing job tasks that will further my advancement.
16. I spend a great deal of time envisioning how to fulfill my aspirations.
17. My work priorities are impacted by a clear picture of what I aspire to be.
18. At work, I am motivated by my hopes and aspirations.

## 6.4 Appendix D: Regulatory Focus Questionnaire

(Ouschan et al., 2007) – measure of chronic regulatory focus

### **Instruction:**

Please judge to what extent you agree with the following statements by using the following scale:

1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree.

### **Promotion Focus Subscale**

1. Taking risks is essential for success.
2. The worst thing you can do when trying to achieve a goal is to worry about making mistakes.
3. If you want to avoid failing, the worst thing you can do is to think about making mistakes.
4. To achieve something, you need to be optimistic.
5. To achieve something, one must try all possible ways of achieving it.
6. You have to take risks if you want to avoid failing.
7. If you keep worrying about mistakes, you will never achieve anything.
8. To avoid failure, you have to be enthusiastic.

**Prevention Focus Subscale**

9. Being cautious is the best policy for success.
10. To achieve something, one must be cautious.
11. Being cautious is the best way to avoid failure.
12. To achieve something, it is most important to know all of the potential obstacles.
13. To avoid failure, it is important to keep in mind all of the potential obstacles that might get in your way.
14. To avoid failure, one has to be careful.



## 6.5 Appendix E: Ethics Approval Form



Research Ethics

Use of Human Participants - Ethics Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Charlice Hurst  
 File Number: 103233  
 Review Level: Full Board  
 Approved Local Adult Participants: 0  
 Approved Local Minor Participants: 0  
 Protocol Title: Influence of Follower Voice on Leader Decision Making  
 Department & Institution: Richard Ivey School of Business/Ivey School of Business, Western University  
 Sponsor:  
 Ethics Approval Date: February 22, 2013 Expiry Date: November 30, 2013

Documents Reviewed & Approved & Documents Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Letter of Information & Consent	Letters of Information and Consent	2012/11/08
Other	App2082 References	2012/11/08
Western University Protocol		
Amendment	Revised Letter of Information and Consent	2013/01/16
Amendment	Listing of revisions made in response to recommendations from WEB	2013/01/16
Instruments	Revision to Instrument document to reflect revised debrief message as per WEB recommendation from review on February 1, 2013 - Debrief updated.	2013/02/12
Amendment	Revisions to Debrief messages as per WEB recommendations from review date of February 1, 2013	2013/02/12
Amendment	List of revisions made as per recommendations released on February 11, 2013 (from review on February 1, 2013)	2013/02/12

This is to notify you that The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (NMREB) which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the approval date noted above.

This approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the NMREB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

Members of the NMREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the NMREB.

The Chair of the NMREB is Dr. Riley Hinson. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 0000941.

Contact for Further Information

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Grace Kelly (grace.kelly@uwo.ca)	<input type="checkbox"/> Janice Sutherland (jsutherl@uwo.ca)
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This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files.

Western University, Research, Support Services Bldg., Rm. 5150  
 London, ON, Canada N6A 3K7 t. 519.661.3036 f. 519.850.2466 www.uwo.ca/research/services/ethics

## 7 Curriculum Vitae

<b>Name:</b>	Karen T. MacMillan
<b>Post-Secondary Education and Degrees:</b>	<p>University of Windsor Windsor, Ontario, Canada 1982 – 1986, Honours B.A. (Psychology)</p> <p>University of Waterloo Waterloo, Ontario, Canada 1989 – 1991, M.A.Sc. (Industrial/Organizational Psychology)</p> <p>University of Western Ontario London, Ontario, Canada 2008 – 2013, Ph.D. (Business) – In progress</p>
<b>Honours and Awards:</b>	<p>Province of Ontario Graduate Scholarship 2011 – 2012, 2012 – 2013</p> <p>C.B. (Bud) Johnston Ontario Graduate Scholarship 2011 – 2012, 2012 – 2013</p> <p>Plan for Excellence Doctoral Fellowship 2008 – 2012</p> <p>Dean’s Recruiting Scholarship 2008 – 2012</p> <p>UWO USC Teaching Honour Roll 2011-2012, 2012-2013</p> <p>ASAC Case Award 2011</p>
<b>Related Work Experience:</b>	<p>Research Assistant, Ivey Business School, Western University 2008 – 2012</p> <p>Sessional Instructor, MOS, Western University 2010 – 2013</p> <p>Sessional Instructor, Odette School of Business, University of Windsor 2008</p>