## Transformational Leadership Theory and Decision Making

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Leadership involves more than exercising influence over others. When leaders and followers value one another and are motivated to work together toward a shared mission they care deeply about, there is a greater likelihood that shared goals and objectives will be achieved. Perhaps more importantly, there is increased potential for followers, leaders, and organizations to be positively transformed for the good of the whole.

The concept of transformational leadership was first introduced in the late 1970s by James MacGregor Burns, an American political scientist and historian. Drawing from nearly four decades of studying the nature of leadership, primarily within the context of national politics, Burns theorized that there are two basic types of leadership: *transactional* and *transforming*. The former, which is most common, is based on the exchange of benefits for services rendered. However, the latter, which is substantially more complex and significantly more effective, appeals to the values and goals of leaders and followers, motivating both to transcend self-interests.

Burns contends that moral leadership begins and ends with the needs and values of those being led.<sup>2</sup> Transforming leadership occurs when people engage with one another in a manner that results in leaders and followers raising each other to new heights of motivation and morality.<sup>3</sup> Both leaders and followers are transformed as they inspire one another to be their best. By endeavoring to understand the motives and values of followers and seeking to satisfy their needs, transforming leaders foster an environment in which followers are transformed into leaders and leaders become moral

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> James MacGregor Burns, *Leadership* (New York: Harper & Row, 1978), 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Burns, *Leadership*, 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Burns, *Leadership*, 20.

agents.4

Drawing from human development theories such as Kohlberg's theory of moral development and Maslow's hierarchy of human needs, Burns believed that transforming leadership is able to "elevate" followers by appealing to "higher values" such as social equality. Whereas transactional leadership focuses more on compliance and meeting basic needs, transforming leadership motivates followers to operate on a higher level of moral reasoning and self-actualization. Additionally, leaders experience self-actualization as they develop the capacity to be taught by those they lead.

Burns also asserted that collective purpose is essential for transforming leadership. Working toward a common goal, leaders and followers become dependent on one another. This, in turn, presents opportunities for mutual support and reciprocity of mobilization. Leaders and followers spur one another on to higher-level goals and aspirations.

Building on Burns' concepts of transactional and transforming leadership, Bernard M. Bass formulated the Transformational Leadership Theory (TLT) in the early 1980s. A pilot study led to the conclusion that transformational leaders motivate followers to exceed expectations through increased effort and creativity. Subsequent research revealed transactional leadership is characterized by *contingent reward* and *management-by-exception*, whereas transformational leadership is characterized by *idealized* 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Burns, *Leadership*, 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> Burns, *Leadership*, 44.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Burns, *Leadership* 117.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Burns, *Leadership*, 426.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Burns, *Leadership*, 425.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Bernard M. Bass, "Theory of Transformational Leadership Redux," *The Leadership Quarterly* 6, no. 4 (Winter 1995): 468.

*influence* (charisma), *inspirational leadership*, *individualized consideration*, and *intellectual stimulation*.<sup>10</sup>

In transactional leadership, there is an agreement between followers and leaders concerning the rewards the leader will provide or the penalties the leader will impose based on what the follower does. The leader's primary role is contingent reinforcement.<sup>11</sup> Because leaders generally want their followers to succeed, they help them set goals and offer incentives for achieving those goals. In an organizational setting, this practice of contingent reward may be observed through the creation of employee performance plans and conducting performance reviews.

Another factor that Bass identified for transactional leadership is management-by-exception. This involves the leader only providing feedback if the follower fails to meet expectations. Also referred to as *criticism-discipline*, this approach to leadership differs from laissez-faire supervision in that the latter is intentionally hands off while the former typically involves close supervision. While contingent reward and management-by-exception may both influence follower effort, both reinforce a transactional approach to leadership.

As noted earlier, Bass' research revealed four key factors of transformational leadership. First, transformational leaders are charismatic and have idealized influence. They are marked by self-confidence and self-determination. They are aware of the needs, values, and aspirations of their followers and genuinely care for their growth and development. Through their idealized influence, they serve as a role model and effectively articulate the organization's ideology. When followers have a favorable impression of their leaders, they are more likely to trust them and perform at a higher

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Bass, "Theory of Transformational Leadership," 469-71.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Bernard M. Bass, *Leadership and Performance Beyond Expectations* (New York: The Free Press, 1985), 121.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Bass, Leadership and Performance, 135.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Bass, Leadership and Performance, 138.

level.14

Second, transformational leaders are inspirational. They evoke an emotional response in their followers by casting a compelling vision and inspiring them to go above and beyond the call of duty. Inspirational leaders are action-oriented, confidence-building, and inspire belief in the "cause." Their inspirational leadership fosters an environment that encourages creativity and experimentation. <sup>15</sup>

Third, transformational leaders practice individualized consideration. They are development-oriented and take the initiative to help individual followers cultivate their skills and abilities. This includes delegating responsibility to subordinates to "stretch" them and help them gain confidence. Providing individualized attention involves regular one-on-one contact, two-way informal communication, keeping followers informed, recognizing individual differences, tailored coaching, and mentoring. When leaders consider the individual needs of followers, followers have an increased sense of ownership, personal responsibility, and greater fulfillment in their work.<sup>16</sup>

Fourth and finally, transformational leaders provide intellectual stimulation that encourages followers to challenge assumptions, identify and analyze key issues, and develop creative solutions to problems. By demonstrating competence, exercising diagnostic skills, and simplifying complex issues, transformational leaders enable followers to engage intellectually, increase comprehension, and reframe problems.<sup>17</sup> This, in turn, leads to enhanced role clarity and acceptance and, ultimately, performance beyond

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Bass, *Leadership and Performance*, 55.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Bass, Leadership and Performance, 68-72.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Bass, Leadership and Performance, 86-96.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Bruce J. Avolio and Bernard M. Bass, eds., *Developing Potential Across a Full Range of Leadership: Cases on Transactional and Transformational Leadership* (Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002), 2.

expectations.18

Bass and his colleague Bruce A. Avolio note that the profiles of most leaders include both transformational and transactional leadership. <sup>19</sup> For example, it is standard practice for most organizations to link compensation to performance. However, to help organizations develop transformational leaders, Bass and Avolio constructed the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), which provides managers with a description of their transformational and transactional behaviors based on an assessment by their employees and/or colleagues. <sup>20</sup>

Leighton Ford notes that transformational leadership motivates people to adopt different values and rise above their own interests for a greater cause. He then illustrates how this was exemplified in the life of Jesus, who challenged his followers to challenge their own paradigms. Perhaps one of the best examples of this is found in the discourse that is commonly referred to as the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. Jesus raises awareness of "kingdom" values by introducing his teaching on several different topics with the phrase, "You have heard that it was said . . ." followed by "but I tell you . . . ." His disciples eventually came to adopt kingdom values and principles as their own because he consistently and patiently provided an example for them through his words and deeds.

Ford also notes that Jesus called his disciples to partner with him in his ministry. His purpose became their purpose. Ford says, "Jesus created a holy dissatisfaction with what was, and a longing for what would be."<sup>23</sup> The

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Bass, *Leadership and Performance*, 99-115.

<sup>19</sup> Avolio and Bass, Developing Potential, 7.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Bernard M. Bass, "From Transactional to Transformational Leadership: Learning to Share the Vision," *Organizational Dynamics* 18, no. 3 (Winter 1990): 28.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Leighton Ford, *Transforming Leadership: Jesus' Way of Creating Vision, Shaping Values, and Empowering Change* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 22.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Matt 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-32, 33-34, 38-39, 43-44 (New International Version).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Ford, *Transforming Leadership*, 216.

willingness of the disciples to leave their "comfort zones" and venture out into a new direction was heavily influenced by Jesus' ability to accurately depict the current state of affairs and cast a compelling vision of the abundant life that is found through walking with him. John 6:67-69 says that when many of Jesus' disciples deserted him, he asked the Twelve, "'You do not want to leave too, do you?' Simon Peter answered, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."<sup>24</sup>

In comparing transactional leadership with transformational leadership, Ford contends that the primary difference between the two is that transactional leaders avoid change while transformational leaders embrace it. He says that whereas transactional leaders operate within the status quo, transformational leaders *change* the status quo. Transactional leaders reinforce and conform to conventional ways of doing things, but transformational leaders change the rules.<sup>25</sup> Transformational leaders provoke innovation. They are not careless, but neither are they averse to risk.

One of the criticisms leveled against TLT is it assumes all followers are "transformable." However, recent research suggests that followers' implicit person theories (IPTs) can moderate the extent to which transformational leadership behavior influences follower performance. Individuals who believe that people are unlikely to change who they are as a person are less likely to be positively impacted by transformational leadership than individuals who believe that anyone can change their basic characteristics. Because IPTs typically are not static, a practical implication of this research is that leaders and organizations may find it beneficial to educate followers

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> John 6:67-69.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Ford, *Transforming Leadership*, 22.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> Stephanie R. Seitz and Bradley P. Owens, "Transformable? A Multi-Dimensional Exploration of Transformational Leadership and Follower Implicit Person Theories," *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 30, no. 1 (2021): 95.

regarding their ability to grow and change.<sup>27</sup>

Another recent study involving a systematic literature review on TLT revealed there is a lack of empirical evidence for three key assumptions: 1) leaders transform followers; 2) followers transform in specific ways; and 3) the effectiveness of transformational leadership is due to the transformation of followers. The study found that most empirical research on TLT has failed to test all three assumptions. For example, only seven out of 320 primary empirical studies on transformational leadership tested the third assumption. While not discounting the reliability and validity of these studies, this review did reveal significant gaps in the research. <sup>29</sup>

In addition to studies highlighting some of the shortcomings of TLT, other recent studies have illustrated the benefits of applying the theory in an organizational setting. One such study conducted in China in 2011 found that transformational leadership not only affects individual follower performance but can also positively impact team performance as well. The results suggest transformational leadership encourages team coordination which in turn enables teams to employ a cooperative rather than competitive approach to conflict management.<sup>30</sup> Teams are more likely to resolve conflict effectively if they have a common identity and cooperative goals, both of which can be influenced by transformational leaders.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Seitz and Owens, "Transformable?", 105.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Nathapon Siangchokyoo, Ryan L. Klinger, and Emily D. Campion, "Follower Transformational as the Linchpin of Transformational Leadership Theory: A Systematic Review and Future Research Agenda," *The Leadership Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (February 2020): 3.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Siangchokyoo et al., "Follower Transformation," 13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Xin-an Zhang, Qing Cao, and Dean Tjosvold, "Linking Transformational Leadership and Team Performance: A Conflict Management Approach," *Journal of Management Studies* 48, no. 7 (November 2011): 1586.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Zhang et al., "Linking Transformation Leadership," 1605.

Finally, a review of empirical research examining transformational leadership and organizational culture shows that transformational leaders typically have organizations with strong cultures. This is significant because the culture of an organization has far-reaching effects on organizational outcomes. When executive leaders consistently demonstrate the four elements of transformational leadership described in Bass' TLT, organizations have a strong sense of purpose, organizational values are reinforced, and productivity increases. 33

Related to the subject of transformational leadership is the issue of how leaders make decisions. On what basis should decisions be made and why? Three theories that address this issue are the Upper Echelons Theory, the Agency Theory, and the Situational Leadership Theory. Each theory offers helpful insights into how decisions may be made in an organizational setting.

Based on the concept of bounded rationality, or the idea that complex situations are subjectively interpreted rather than objectively known, the Upper Echelons Theory (UET) asserts that leaders interpret situations and make choices according to their personalities, experiences, and values.<sup>34</sup> What organizations do and how they operate reflect the biases and individual perspectives of their executive leaders. The decisions these leaders make are influenced by their educational and professional backgrounds as well as other demographics.

Developed by Donald C. Hambrick and Phyllis A. Mason in 1984, UET challenged the view that the performance of large organizations is primarily

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Roger J. Givens, "Transformational Leadership: The Impact on Organizational and Personal Outcomes," *Emerging Leadership Journeys* 1, no. 1 (2008): 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Givens, "Transformational Leadership," 8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>34</sup> Donald C. Hambrick, "Upper Echelons Theory: An Update," *The Academy of Management Review* 32, no. 2 (April 2007): 334.

determined by the industry of which the organization is a part and its competitiveness within that industry.<sup>35</sup> The composition of the leadership of the organization was not considered to be a significant variable. However, some studies showed that the intentional, strategic choices of an organization play an important role, and these choices are based on managerial perceptions that stem from the knowledge base and values of the organization's executive leaders. Hambrick and Mason proposed that in addition to these psychological characteristics of the upper echelon, other characteristics such as age, functional tracks, and other career experiences also influenced strategic choices.<sup>36</sup>

More recent research on UET has revealed that two moderators of UET are managerial discretion and executive job demands.<sup>37</sup> The more discretion the top management team has regarding how to respond in various situations, the greater their individual characteristics influence the choices made and organizational performance. Conversely, the less discretion they have due to external factors (e.g., market trends) or internal factors (e.g., board influence), the less likely it is that strategic choices will be based on the collective perspectives of the senior executives. Additionally, the degree to which the organization's leaders are able to manage their jobs can predict the reliability of the UET. Leaders who are overwhelmed by the many demands placed on them tend to base decisions on their past experiences and dispositions. However, leaders who have their jobs well in hand have more freedom to analyze situations and be more objective.

Other factors that should be considered when attempting to assess the impact UET has on decision making include the distribution of power within the executive leadership team and the extent to which behavioral

 $<sup>^{35}</sup>$  Donald C. Hambrick and Phyllis A. Mason, "Upper Echelons: The Organization as a Reflection of Its Top Managers," *The Academy of Management Review* 9, no. 2 (April 1984): 194.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> Hambrick and Mason, "Upper Echelons," 195-8.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> Hambrick, "Upper Echelons Theory," 335.

integration exists in the team.<sup>38</sup> If members on the leadership team share a particular background and those leaders hold more power or influence than other leaders on the team, the strategic choices made by the team are more likely to mirror the perspective of those leaders. Other research indicates that behavioral integration among executive leaders can have significant positive effects on organizational outcomes.<sup>39</sup> If leaders make decisions together, UET can help explain the relationship between leader characteristics and organizational strategy. However, if leaders operate independently and decisions are made at a divisional level, UET essentially becomes irrelevant.

Because UET concerns the effect leaders' values and experiences have on decision making, it is worthwhile to consider the role transformational leadership can play in shaping these values and experiences. A CEO who exercises transformational leadership can have a significant influence on the other members of the executive team. This begins with selecting individuals for senior leadership roles who are highly competent, have diverse experiences and perspectives, and who are able to work together synergistically. The charismatic CEO can also inspire and stimulate top-level leaders to share and uphold the organization's core values. The development of transformational leaders can also be fostered by establishing a management training program that equips emerging leaders with the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to achieve their leadership potential.

Another theory that can help explain how leaders make decisions is Agency Theory (AT). Originally developed in the 1970s by economists seeking to understand the contractual nature of a principal-agent (e.g., share-holder-corporation) relationship and the inherent challenges of having different roles and perspectives, the theory can also be applied in an organizational setting.<sup>40</sup> For example, in a non-profit organization, the principal-agent relationship could be understood in terms of donors as the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Hambrick, "Upper Echelons Theory," 336.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Hambrick, "Upper Echelons Theory," 336.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> Kathleen M. Eisenhardt, "Agency Theory: An Assessment and Review," *Academy of Management Review* 14, no. 1 (January 1989): 58.

principal and the organization's board of directors as the agent. AT could also be applied to the relationship between the board of directors and the executive leadership team.

In regard to decision making, AT addresses how agents make decisions on behalf of principals despite conflicting goals and varying perspectives on risk-taking. Because agents are accountable to their principals, they must balance the need to fulfill the principal's expectations with making strategic decisions on a day-to-day basis that will best serve the mission of the organization. This could involve setting goals or taking risks that could be at odds with the preferences of the principal. AT also considers how agents may prioritize self-interests at the cost of what is best for the enterprise, at least from the principal's perspective.

Although the principal-agent relationship may be characterized as transactional, how leaders function within each domain can be transformational. For example, the board of directors (principal) for an organization may empower the CEO (agent) with broad decision-making authority because they are empathetic to the immense leadership challenges the leader faces and value the CEO's proven ability to manage complex issues well. This builds the confidence of the CEO and inspires her/him to lead boldly but also act in a manner that does not undermine the trust of the board. Similarly, the CEO (principal) who exercises transformational leadership will value the talents of the individual members of the executive team (agent) and endeavor to understand their needs and the needs of their respective functions. Whenever possible, decisions are made by consensus, but the competence and charisma of the CEO make it possible for the team to defer to her/his judgment if consensus cannot be reached.

Writing on AT and the governance of non-profit organizations, Van Puyvelde et al. note that while managers function as principals and employees as agents, employees have varying levels of influence on their managers. This is because some employees who are exceptionally qualified have chosen to serve in the organization based on their passion for the mission and are willing to be compensated at a below-market level. To retain these employees, managers may seek to accommodate their preferences and win their approval by altering working conditions. This perspective provides an interesting twist on the concept of "leading up" popularized by Michael Useem and invites exploration on the topic of the relationship between Upward Leadership Theory and TLT and how subordinates can practice elements of transformational leadership for the transformation of their managers.

Finally, the last theory presented in this paper that can help shed light on how transformational leadership can influence decision-making is Situational Leadership Theory (SLT). This theory was developed in the late 1970s by Paul Hersey and Kenneth Blanchard. Based on the premise that leadership is synonymous with influence and influence is key to the performance of followers, SLT holds that leaders influence followers by operating from seven different power bases: 1) *Coercive power* based on fear; 2) *Connection power* based on connections with others who are highly influential; 3) *Expert power* based on expertise and ability; 4) *Information power* based on access to valuable information; 5) *Legitimate power* based on position; 6) *Referent power* based on personal traits; and 7) *Reward power* based on the ability to reward.<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Stijn Van Puyvelde et al., "The Governance of Nonprofit Organizations: Integrating Agency Theory with Stakeholder and Stewardship Theories," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (May 2011): 445.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> Puyvelde et al., "The Governance of Nonprofit Organizations," 445.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> Michael Useem, *Leading Up: How to Lead Your Boss So You Both Win* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>44</sup> Paul Hersey, Kenneth H. Blanchard, and Walter E. Natemeyer, "Situational Leadership, Perception, and the Impact of Power," *Group & Organization Studies* 4, no. 4 (December 1979): 419.

Which type of power base leaders use is determined by the maturity of the followers. The maturity of followers is based on their ability and willingness to take responsibility for the tasks they are responsible for managing. Followers become more mature as they increase their confidence and motivation. If followers have a low level of maturity, the leader will exercise coercive, connection, or reward power. Conversely, if followers have a high level of maturity, leaders will exercise expert, information, or referent power. It should be noted that as SLT evolved, "ability" became referred to as "competence," "willingness" became referred to as "commitment," and "maturity" became referred to as "development."

Working with this understanding of leader influence and follower maturity, Hersey and Blanchard proposed that leaders should use one of the four following leadership styles depending on followers' maturity: Telling, Selling, Participating, or Delegating. Each style involves a combination of relationship behavior (the level of support the leader needs to provide) and task behavior (the level of direction required from the leader). This approach to *situational leadership* is effective when leaders are able to effectively assess the maturity level of followers and adjust their leadership style as followers mature.<sup>47</sup>

The "Telling" style of leadership should be used with followers with low maturity. Clear instructions and close supervision need to be provided to individuals who are unable and unwilling to take responsibility. This type of situation requires high task behavior and low relationship behavior from the leader.<sup>48</sup>

The "Selling" style of leadership should be used with followers with low

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> Hersey et al., "Situational Leadership," 420.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> Geir Thompson and Lars Glasø, "Situational Leadership Theory: A Test from Three Perspectives," *Leadership and Organization Development Journal* 36, no. 5 (2015): 527.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Hersey et al., "Situational Leadership," 422.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Hersey et al., "Situational Leadership," 422.

to moderate maturity. In this situation, the individuals are willing but unable to take responsibility for the tasks they perform. The leader should exercise high task behavior to provide the direction that is needed but also exercise high relationship behavior to reinforce the follower's willingness.<sup>49</sup>

The "Participating" style of leadership should be used with followers who are able to perform the tasks assigned to them but lack the motivation to do so. In this situation, the leader must exercise high relationship behavior and join with the follower in decision-making. However, low task behavior is needed from the leader. <sup>50</sup>

The "Delegating" style of leadership should be used with followers with high maturity. Because these individuals have the ability and motivation to perform tasks, the direction and support required from the leader are minimal. In this situation, leaders exercise low relationship and task behaviors. <sup>51</sup>

When applying SLT to decision making, several implications should be considered. First, it is essential to be able to assess the situation effectively and accurately. The choices a leader makes in regard to how she/he interacts with followers will depend on several variables. However, these variables may not be easy to assess. A 2009 study involving 80 supervisors and 357 followers from financial organizations found that SLT is less effective if leaders and followers have different understandings of follower competence and commitment.<sup>52</sup>

Second, in addition to the follower's competence and commitment, other factors need to be considered when deciding what style of leadership is needed for a particular situation. A 1987 study of teachers and principals from 14 high schools in the U.S. revealed that there are situations in which

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Hersey et al., "Situational Leadership," 422.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> Hersey et al., "Situational Leadership," 422.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> Hersey et al., "Situational Leadership," 422.

 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 52}$  Thompson and Glasø, "Situational Leadership Theory," 528.

mature followers desire and expect significant direction and support from their leaders.<sup>53</sup> For example, highly competent and motivated teachers who are new to a high school may prefer that the principal provide more structure than SLT would suggest is necessary.

Third and finally, it should be noted that SLT stresses the importance of leaders being committed to helping followers mature.<sup>54</sup> It is at this last point that SLT intersects with TLT. Leaders must be intentional about developing followers. Deciding how to engage with followers should not only be based on their perceived deficiencies but also on their potential. By exercising the four elements of transformational leadership, followers and leaders grow in their capacity to meet shared goals and mutually benefit from each other's development.

TLT and SLT can be applied in a wide variety of leadership contexts. However, there are several considerations that should be kept in mind when applying these theories to global organizations that partner with churches to achieve a shared mission. For example, cultural norms can vary significantly from one geography to the next. How leaders and followers relate to one another will be shaped by what is expected in their particular cultural context. For example, if it is acceptable in a culture for power to be distributed unequally, followers are generally more dependent on leaders, and leadership is rarely questioned or challenged. However, in cultures where the "power distance" is lower, followers are typically less dependent on their leaders and prefer consultation and interdependence. Leaders of global organizations who have followers in diverse cultural contexts must understand these differences and adjust their leadership styles accordingly.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Robert P. Vecchio, "Situational Leadership Theory: An Examination of a Prescriptive Theory," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 72, no 3. (1987): 450.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Hersey et al., "Situational Leadership," 422.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> Geert Hofstede, Gert Jan Hofstede, and Michael Minkov, *Cultures and Organizations: Intercultural Cooperation and Its Importance for Survival* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010), 61.

In addition to being able to adapt their leadership approach to the culture in which their followers live, it is also important that leaders of global organizations seek to understand and appreciate the unique perspectives that followers in different cultures can provide. Through individualized consideration, leaders must listen carefully and keep an open mind. This is essential to establish trust and develop rapport. The entire organization benefits when diverse voices are heard and different perspectives are considered when making decisions.

For organizations that partner with churches, the idealized influence of leaders still matters; however, the charisma of leaders springs more from authentic humility and a servant-heart than self-confidence. It is expected that leaders in Christian organizations uphold and model Christian values and leadership principles, not the least of which is to follow the example of Jesus, who took upon himself "the very nature of a servant" and set an example of servant-leadership for his disciples (see John 13:1-17).

By seeking to understand and apply TLT and other leadership theories to their individual leadership contexts, leaders will increase their effectiveness and contribute in positive ways to the development of those they lead. They will have a greater awareness of methods that are evidence-based. They will be better equipped to meet the needs of followers and further the mission and vision of the organizations they serve.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Phil 3:7.

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