

Running Head: PARENTAL AUTONOMY SUPPORT AND TRANSFORMATIONAL
LEADERSHIP IN STUDENT RESIDENT ASSISTANTS

Parental Autonomy Support and Transformational Leadership in Student Resident Assistants

Samuel Halligan

State University of New York at New Paltz

Abstract

This study investigated the association between parental autonomy support and transformational leadership in resident assistants at the State University of New York at New Paltz. Resident assistants (n= 35) were asked a series of questions about their leadership style, personality, and parents. Results indicated that there was no relationship between parental autonomy support and transformational leadership for resident assistants, but that there were relationships between father involvement and transactional leadership, and openness to new experiences and transformational leadership.

Keywords: Psychology; Leadership; Transformational Leadership; Transactional Leadership; Parental Autonomy Support; Parental Involvement; Resident Assistant;

Introduction

This study investigated the relationship between parental autonomy and transformational leadership for undergraduate resident assistants. Parents are often the first role models for their children and serve as leadership role models (Bandura, 1969; Anderson 1943). This study addresses the questions of how parental autonomy support influences children, and if that influence leads to student leaders becoming transformational and transactional leaders.

Leadership Styles

While there are a number of different ways to characterize styles of leadership, one particularly influential approach has been to make a distinction between transformational and transactional leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1990; Bass, 1985a). Each of these styles contains multiple dimensions, which I will review briefly below.

Transformational leadership is defined as a leadership style that is focused on inspiring and motivating followers to understand how to reach outcomes, and to look beyond their own self-interest to reach those goals (Burns, 1978). Transformational leadership encompasses four different factors: charisma, which was later renamed “idealized influence” (Bass & Avolio, 1999), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985b). Idealized influence is when a leader acts as a role model for their followers, who identify with these leaders and have a tendency to follow them. Inspirational motivation is a leader’s ability to create a vision that followers will be motivated to follow. Intellectual stimulation is the degree in which a leader takes risks and challenges assumptions, developing followers who think independently. Individualized consideration is the degree in which a leader meets a followers needs, supporting the follower and giving them what they need to succeed (Bass, 1985b).

In contrast to transformational leadership, transactional leadership emphasizes an exchange between leaders and followers. It utilizes the self-interest of followers to have them complete tasks (Burns, 1978). In transactional leadership, it is common for the leader to wait for problems to occur before fixing them (Bass & Avolio, 1990). Bass (1985b) breaks down transactional leadership into four dimensions: contingent reward, active management by exception, passive leadership and laissez-faire. Contingent rewards refer to when the manager links the goal to a physical or psychological reward for task completion (Bass, 1998). If a leader is performing active management, they are correcting a follower's mistake, whereas if the leader is performing passive management, they are taking no corrective action before the problem comes to their attention (Bass, 1998). Laissez-faire is a leadership style in which a manager does not make decisions and instead encourages an environment in which followers make a number of decisions while they ignore their supervisory duties (Bradford & Lippitt, 1945).

Parents as Leaders

The psychological literature has illustrated that parents are important in the development of leadership in their children (Ferguson et al., 2006). Ferguson et al. (2006) utilized Lewin's (1948) democratic, authoritarian and laissez-faire leadership styles to measure parenting values associated with young adults' childhoods in relation to those leadership styles. The study found partial support for parental figures having an influence on their children's future leadership style (Ferguson et al., 2006).

Hartman and Harris (1992) utilized a Behavior Description Questionnaire to describe the management styles of young adults. They then used the questionnaire again to assess a parental figure's management style and aligned this data with the parents' own questionnaire data to assess if there were correlations between the parental figure's management style, their own

management style, and the young adults' management style. They found that the child's perception of the parent's management style may be more important than the parent's actual management style as the perceived style would be the style that impacted the child's own style later in life. Similarly, a study by Zachartos et al. (2000) found that adolescents who perceived their parents' leadership style as transformational would often develop and display these behaviors as well.

The relationship between leadership and parenting has also been shown to be influenced by gender. It has been shown, for instance, that adolescents would develop as transformational leaders by perceiving their fathers' leadership style, but not their mothers' (Zachartos et al., 2000; Hartman & Harris, 1992).

Parental Autonomy Support and Leadership

In this study I will investigate the relationship between parental autonomy support (Gagne, 2003) and leadership style. Parental autonomy support refers to how much choice and encouragement parents provide for their children. This autonomy orientation assesses how much an individual is oriented to environments that allow them to be intrinsically motivated (Deci and Ryan, 1985). Those who feel autonomously regulated are found to be relatively free to make their own decisions (deCharms, 1968).

High levels of autonomy support are associated with a number of positive outcomes (Deci & Ryan, 1994; Grolnick & Ryan, 1989; Pedersen, 2017). Autonomy support was shown to relate to high academic performance in 7th and 8th graders (Deci & Ryan, 1994). In a study of autonomy support among the parents of elementary school students, Grolnick and Ryan (1989) found that autonomy support positively related to children's academic performance, adjustment, autonomous self-regulation and teacher-rated competence. Additionally, college females (but not

males) who had autonomy support and were encouraged to make their own decisions were found to enjoy university life more (Pedersen, 2017).

Transformational leadership involves granting autonomy to followers and meeting their needs. Specifically, the individual consideration factor of transformational leadership is the degree to which a leader meets a follower's needs, supporting the follower and giving them what they need to succeed (Bass, 1985b). This factor is very similar to the idea of parental autonomy support, which measures the amount of choice and encouragement individuals are given from their parents. Managers with a transformational leadership style provide more autonomy support; this makes employees happier and leads to less burn out (Gilbert, Dagenais-Desmarais & St-Hilaire, 2017). A high level of autonomy support among managers has also been shown to positively influence need satisfaction and perceived organizational support, which then positively predict employees' job satisfaction and performance (Gilet et al., 2013).

Due to the similarity between parental autonomy support and transformational leadership, I hypothesize that college students in a leadership role (i.e., resident assistants) will be influenced by the amount of parental autonomy support they receive from their parents, with a high amount of autonomy support strongly relating to a transformational leadership style. A lack of autonomy support, on the other hand, is hypothesized to predict a transactional leadership style.

Introversion as a Moderator to Transformational Leadership

The current study also proposes that personality may play a moderating role in the relationship between parenting and leadership. In exploring personality, I will utilize the Big Five framework, which tests for five personality traits (openness, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) in individuals (Goldberg, 1993). A number of studies have utilized this framework to determine how personality relates to transformational and

transactional leadership styles; this line of research has revealed that extraversion positively relates to transformational leadership (Lim & Ployhart, 2004; Judge & Bono, 2000; Bono & Judge, 2004). Based on these findings, I hypothesize that introversion will decrease the strength of the relationship between parental autonomy support and transformational leadership style in Resident Assistants.

Methods

Participants

The sample consisted of resident assistants from the State University of New York at New Paltz (N = 35). Data from five participants was omitted as their responses were incomplete. The survey was complete using Qualtrics survey software, which combined all of the measures listed below for a comprehensive survey that took approximately ten minutes to complete. Participants ranged in age from 18-24 with the majority of participants being in the 21-24 range (67.5%), with the rest in the 18-20 range (32.5%). A slight majority of participants were women (50%), and 49.5% were men and .50% were gender neutral. A majority of the participants identified as Caucasian (77.5%), 7.5% were African American, 10% were Asian, 0% were Native-American, and Pacific Islander, and 5% reported “other” ethnicity.

Measures

To measure parental autonomy, I used the Perception of Parents Scales (POPS) college student scale. This scale assesses college students' perceptions of their parents' autonomy support, involvement, and parental warmth (Robbins, 1994). Robbins' (1994) dissertation provided evidence that the scale was valid and reliable. Additionally, a study conducted by Niemiec et al., (2006) also provided evidence for the validity and reliability of the scale.

To measure transformational leadership, I used two scales. The first scale, which I created, is called the Resident Assistant Transformational Leadership Questionnaire (See Appendix A). This scale measures transformational leadership in Resident Assistant students. It is based on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The second scale is the Global Transformational Leadership Scale. This scale is composed of seven items that measure each factor of transformational leadership. It is also based on a five-point Likert scale (1 = rarely or never to 5 = very frequently or always), and was found to be valid and reliable (Carless & Wearing Leon Mann, 2000). The purpose of these scales is to determine if a Resident Assistant is a transformational leader.

To measure personality, I will be using the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI), a ten item scale that measures the five-factor model of personality traits. The TIPI has been shown to achieve a slightly higher validity than other brief scales for the five-factor model (Furnham, 2008). The purpose of this scale is to determine if the perceived relationship between parental autonomy support and transformational leadership is moderated by a variable of personality.

Results

Contrary to the hypothesis, transformational leadership in RAs was not related to mothers' autonomy support on the RA transformational leadership scale $r(35) = -.005, p > .05$ or on the Global Transformational Leadership Scale, $r(35) = -.295, p > .05$. Transformational leadership for fathers was also not related to the Resident Assistant Transformational Leadership Questionnaire $r(35) = -.267, p > .05$ or the Global Transformational Leadership Questionnaire, $r(35) = -.274, p > .05$. When both scales were compared, they shared a significant relationship suggesting that my own scale shared the same valid nature as the already utilized Global Transformational Leadership Questionnaire, $r(35) = .352, p < .05$.

I also observed some unexpected significant results, such as a negative relationship between father involvement and transactional leadership $r(35)=-.491, p>.05$. Additionally when utilizing the five-factor model, it was found that transformational leadership has a significant positive correlation with openness to experience $r(35)=.352, p<.05$. Extraversion $r(35)=.155, p>.05$, agreeableness $r(35)=.064, p>.05$, neuroticism $r(35)=-.147, p>.05$, and conscientiousness $r(35)=.306, p>.05$ showed no relationship with transformational leadership.

Discussion

The results do not support the hypothesis that parental autonomy support is related to transformational leadership in college RA's. Specifically, I did not observe a significant relationship between transformational leadership and parental autonomy support. Because both the scale that I created and the validated Global Transformational Leadership scales provided similar results, and these scales were significantly correlated with each other, I do not interpret these results as a flaw in the transformational leadership scale that I developed.

These results imply that transformational leadership and its overall development do not relate to parental involvement, autonomy support, and warmth. Additionally, the only trait that was related to transformational leadership was openness to new experiences, while extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism were found to have no significant relationships with either measure of transformational leadership. These results imply that the big five personality factors do not have much influence on transformational leadership, and could illustrate why the trait theory of leadership utilizes different measures of personality and not the five factor model. Openness was shown to have this relationship in other studies, however in some of these studies, other personality factors also had a significant relationship with

transformational leadership including extraversion and agreeableness (Zopiatis & Constantini, 2012; Lee, 2012; Judge & Bono, 2000).

A significant result found in the study was a significant negative correlation between transactional leadership and father involvement. This illustrates the more a father is involved in the life of the child, the less likely that child is to become a transactional leader once older. This relationship could be explained by children of uninvolved parents attempting to receive parental attention through the attainment of short-term goals, which could result in them implementing this as a leadership strategy later in life.

Limitations and Future Direction

One major limitation for this study is the small sample size; with a sample size of thirty five participants, statistical power is low. Another major limitation of this study was unavailability of the most utilized and valid measure of transformational leadership. Not having the financial resources to utilize the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire meant using scales that were new or utilized less. Another limitation of this study was the lack of demographic diversity, with the majority of Resident Assistants in the demographic pool being female and white, it was difficult to receive diverse demographic results and therefore skewed the study to a white and female perspective.

This study opens up the possibility for a more in-depth study in the future with more participants. A future study could include investigating the impact that openness has on transformation leadership and its importance compared to the other four factors of personality. Another future study could further investigate the relationship between involvement and leadership, potentially illustrating parental involvement as more important than parental warmth or autonomy support.

References

- Bandura, A. (1969). Social learning of moral judgments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 11*(3), 275–279. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0026998>
- Bass, B. M. (1985a). *Leadership and performance beyond expectations*. New York: Free Press.
- Bass, B. M. (1985b). *The multifactor leadership questionnaire: Form 5*. Binghamton: State University of New York.
- Bass, B. M. (1998). *Transformational Leadership: Industrial, Military, and Educational Impact*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates
- Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1990). Developing transformational leadership: 1992 and beyond. *Journal of European Industrial Training, 14* (5), 21–27.
- Bass, B. M. & Avolio, B. J. (1999). *Training full range leadership*. Redwood City, CA: Mind Garden.
- Bono, J. E., & Judge, T. A. (2004). Personality and Transformational and Transactional Leadership: A Meta-Analysis. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 89*(5), 901–910. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.89.5.901>
- Bradford, L. R., & Lippitt, R. (1945). Building a democratic work group. *Personnel, 22* (3), 142–148.
- Burns, J.M. (1978) *Leadership*. New York. Harper & Row.
- Carless, S. A., Wearing, A. J., & Mann, L. (2000). A short measure of transformational leadership. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 14*(3), 389–405. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022991115523>
- DeCharms, R. (1968). *Personal causation: The internal affective determinants of behavior*. New York: Academic Press.

- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1985). Intrinsic motivation and self-determination in human behavior. New York: Plenum.
- Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (1994). Promoting self-determined education. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 38(1), 3–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0031383940380101>
- Ferguson, E. D., Hagaman, J., Grice, J. W., & Peng, K. (2006). From leadership to parenthood: The applicability of leadership styles to parenting styles. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 10(1), 43–55. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1089-2699.10.1.43>
- Furnham, A., & Fudge, C. (2008). The Five Factor model of personality and sales performance. *Journal of Individual Differences*, 29(1), 11–16. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1614-0001.29.1.11>
- Gagné, M. The Role of Autonomy Support and Autonomy Orientation in Prosocial Behavior Engagement. *Motivation and Emotion* 27, 199–223 (2003).
<https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1025007614869>
- Gilbert, M.-H., Dagenais-Desmarais, V., & St-Hilaire, F. (2017). Transformational leadership and autonomy support management behaviors: The role of specificity in predicting employees' psychological health. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 38(2), 320–332. <https://doi.org/10.1108/LODJ-08-2015-0173>
- Nicolas Gillet , Marylne Gagn , Sverine Sauvagre & Evelyne Fouquereau (2013) The role of supervisor autonomy support, organizational support, and autonomous and controlled motivation in predicting employees' satisfaction and turnover intentions, *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 22:4, 450-460, DOI: 10.1080/1359432X.2012.665228

Goldberg, L. R. (1993). The structure of phenotypic personality traits. *American Psychologist*, 48, 26–34.

Grolnick, Wendy & Ryan, Richard. (1989). Parent Styles Associated with Children's Self-Regulation and Competence in School. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. 81. using a structured interview. 10.1037/0022-0663.81.2.143.

Sandra J. Hartman & O. Jeff Harris (1992) The Role of Parental Influence in Leadership, The *Journal of Social Psychology*, 132:2, 153-167, DOI: 10.1080/00224545.1992.9922968

Judge & Bono, (2000). “Five-Factor Model of Personality and Transformational Leadership” *Journal of Applied Psychology* 2000, Vol. 85, No. 5, 751-765.

Lee. (2012), “Big Five Personality Traits and Equity Sensitivity and Transformational Leadership” *International Journal of Social Science and Humanity*, Vol. 2, No. 2, March 2012.

Lim, B.-C., & Ployhart, R. E. (2004). Transformational Leadership: Relations to the Five-Factor Model and Team Performance in Typical and Maximum Contexts. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89(4), 610–621. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.89.4.610>

Magomaeva, Asiyat, ""who Taught Us How To Lead?" Parental Influence On Leadership Styles" (2013). Wayne State University Theses. Paper 307.

Christopher P. Niemiec, Martin F. Lynch, Maarten Vansteenkiste, Jessey Bernstein, Edward L. Deci, Richard M. Ryan (2006). *Journal of Adolescence* Volume 29, Issue 5, October 2006, Pages 761-775. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.adolescence.2005.11.009>

Pedersen, Daphne. (2017). Parental Autonomy Support and College Student Academic Outcomes. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*. 26. 1-13. 10.1007/s10826-017-0750-4.

Robbins, R. J. (1994). An assessment of perceptions of parental autonomy support and control:

Child and parent correlates. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Department of

Psychology, University of Rochester, 1994.

Zacharatos, Anthea & Barling, Julian & Kelloway, Kevin. (2000). Development and effects of transformational leadership in adolescents. *Leadership Quarterly*. 11. 211-226.

10.1016/S1048-9843(00)00041-2.

Zopiatis, A. and Constanti, P. (2012), "Extraversion, openness and conscientiousness: The route to transformational leadership in the hotel industry", *Leadership & Organization*

Development Journal, Vol. 33 No. 1, pp. 86-104.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/01437731211193133>

Appendix A: Resident Assistant Transformational Leadership Questionnaire

Please read each of the following statements and rate the degree to which you agree or disagree.

Idealized Influence

1. The level of trust is high between yourself and a resident, after you have handled a situation that involved them.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
--------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

2. I feel that my RA staff respects me.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
--------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

Inspirational Motivation

1. I support my RA staff when they do something well.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
--------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

2. I support my residents when they come to me for guidance.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
--------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

Intellectual Stimulation

1. I go out of my way to give my staff new solutions to problems.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
--------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

2. I encourage my residents to think for themselves and come up with novel solutions to problems that they are facing (e.g., a conflict between roommates).

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
--------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

Individualized Consideration

1. I often reach out to my residents that fall through the cracks.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
--------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

2. Do you make an effort to involve all staff members in decision making process, especially those who do not contribute to the conversation as much

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
--------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

Contingent Reward

1. I often reward my residents for good behavior.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
--------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

2. I make clear my expectations when another RA isn't doing their job.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
--------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

Management by Exception

1. I have trouble noticing the early stages of a problem or incident

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
--------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

2. If a conflict arises on my staff that doesn't involve me, I stay out of it.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
--------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

Laissez-Faire Leadership

1. I am content to let my RA staff do what they wish.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
--------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

2. I tend to let residents do whatever they want as long as they aren't harming anyone.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
--------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------