

The Participatory Theater of Leadership

by

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ABSTRACT

The Participatory Theater Framework of Leadership

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The traditional conceptualization of leadership can be understood as the leader occupying centerstage whilst the audience of ‘followers’ remains largely in the dark. Furthermore, as an actor on stage would perceive a booing member of the audience as malevolent or ignorant, the extant literature mainly depicts non-followers as obstacles, inefficiencies, or irritants that should be corrected so that they can become productive members of the group (Ford & Harding, 2018).

Yet, leadership does not only revolve around the leader and his/her ability to create ‘good followers’ (Collinson, 2006). It is the compilation of cooperating and clashing individual agencies of the group members that results in more than mere aggregation. Through their support, opposition, and even apathy, every group member is a participant of the leadership phenomenon and they individually and collectively influence the group goal and to what extent it is actualized. As such, this dissertation is dedicated to understanding who the constituents of leadership really are and how leadership as a multilevel social phenomenon that is co-created by all group members actually works.

In this dissertation, I introduce the participatory theater framework (PTF) of leadership as a novel and holistic theoretical approach that can enable us to answer the questions above.

The participatory theater framework recognizes everyone in the group, including the leader and all forms of followers and non-followers, individually and collectively, as agentic performers of leadership. Deriving its foundations from various research areas such as social and cognitive psychology, moral philosophy, and game theory, this dissertation (i) establishes the theoretical foundation of the PTF and proposes a typology of roles people adopt in leadership situations, (ii) demonstrates that even those who are most commonly thought to be passive (i.e., devoted followers of toxic leaders; frequently called ‘sheep’) are indeed willful co-creators of the leadership phenomenon, and (iii) presents empirical evidence for the existence of the proposed typology of roles.

ÖZETÇE

Liderlik için Katılımcı Tiyatro Modeli

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Liderliğin geleneksel tanımında lider sahne ışıklarını kendinde toplar ve takipçiler seyirciler olarak çoğunlukla karanlıkta kalır. Dahası, mevcut literatür sahnedeki bir sanatçının kendisini yuhlayan bir seyirciyi cahil veya kötü niyetli görmesine benzer şekilde, lideri desteklemeyenleri bir engel ve verimsizlik olarak görüp, gruba faydalı bireyler olabilmeleri için düzeltilmeleri gerektiğini varsayıyor (Ford & Harding, 2018).

Ne var ki, liderlik sadece liderden ve onun 'iyi takipçiler' yaratma kabiliyetinden ibaret değildir (Collinson, 2006). Liderlik, iş birliği yapan bireylerin iradeleri kadar çatışan iradeleri de kapsar ve tek tek bireylerin toplamından daha öte bir kavramdır. Destek vererek, muhalefet ederek, ya da sadece kayıtsızlıklarıyla, her grup üyesi liderliğin bir parçasıdır ve hem bireysel hem de kolektif iradeleriyle liderlik hedeflerini ve bu hedeflerin ne ölçüde gerçekleşeceğini belirlerler. Dolayısıyla, bu doktora tezi liderliğin bileşenlerinin aslında kimler olduğunu ve liderliğin birden fazla seviyede (birey, alt grup, grup) tüm grup üyeleri tarafından birlikte yaratılan bir sosyal fenomen olarak gerçekte nasıl işlediğini anlamaya adanmıştır.

Bu doktora tezinde, literatürdeki yukarıda bahsedilen boşlukları doldurmayı amaçlayan ve yeni ve bütüncül bir liderlik anlayışı olan katılımcı tiyatro modelini (KTM) takdim ediyorum. Katılımcı tiyatro liderlik modeli lider, destekçiler ve muhalifler dahil olmak üzere gruptaki herkesin hem bireysel hem de kolektifin bir parçası olarak liderlik fenomeninin bilinçli aktörleri olduğunu kabul ediyor. Temellerini sosyal ve bilişsel psikoloji, ahlak felsefesi ve oyun teorisi gibi farklı araştırma alanlarından alan bu doktora tezi (i) KTM'nin teorik temellerini tesis ediyor ve insanların liderlik durumlarında benimseyebilecekleri rollerin bir tipolojisini öneriyor, (ii) araştırmacılar ve toplum tarafından en pasif olduğu düşünülen ve sık sık 'koyun' olarak yaftalanan insanların (toksik liderlerin adanmış takipçileri) bile liderlik fenomeninin bilinçli ve kendi iradesi ile karar veren aktörleri olduğunu gösteriyor, ve (iii) KTM tarafından önerilen rol tipolojisinin var olduğuna dair ampirik delil sunuyor.

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hope to be more like him in the (near) future.

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*Chapter 1***GENERAL INTRODUCTION**

Leadership is ubiquitous. As Arrow (1950) so elegantly showed in his Nobel laureate work, there are no straight-forward and fair mechanisms that can resolve our social-choice problems. As soon as we have more than two intelligible beings involved in a decision-making process, we must observe the intermediation mechanisms of leadership for groups to function. Furthermore, leadership is vital in motivating group members to commit to the group goals and to spend effort so that those goals can be reached (Burns, 1978).

Leadership, then, is a perpetually emergent social phenomenon that entails all group members and involves mechanisms that contribute to group's goal setting and performance (Collinson, 2005).

Being fundamental as it is for human civilization, leadership has been studied for thousands of years in various cultures around the world. Despite this continuous interest in the phenomenon, the scope of its study has been astonishingly limited and overwhelmingly leader-centric until very recently (Crossman & Crossman, 2011; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Indeed, from Plato's Philosopher King and Hobbes' Leviathan to Burns' Transformational Leadership and Avolio's Authentic Leadership, the spotlight remained almost exclusively on leaders (Avolio et al., 2004; Burns, 1978; Hobbes, 2002; Plato, 1998). Furthermore,

although the importance of followers in leadership processes is now well agreed-upon (Epitropaki et al., 2017; Rast et al., 2013), they are still frequently treated as mirrors that reflect the leader's influence on group outcomes without explicit agency (May et al., 2014; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Aligned with the leaders' (or in the toxic leaders' case, organizations') values, leadership scholars generally consider group members as tools leaders utilize to reach preset goals and appraise their worth accordingly. Consequently, most prominent theories still "pay insufficient attention to the [...] significance of follower dissent and resistance" (Collinson & Tourish, 2015, p. 576). In fact, the traditional conceptualization of leadership can be understood as the leader occupying centerstage whilst the audience of 'followers' remains largely in the dark. Furthermore, as an actor on stage would perceive a booing member of the audience as malevolent or ignorant, the extant literature mainly depicts non-followers as obstacles, inefficiencies, or irritants that should be corrected so that they can become productive members of the group (Ford & Harding, 2018).

Yet, leadership does not only revolve around the leader and his/her ability to create 'good followers' (Collinson, 2006). It is the compilation of cooperating and clashing individual agencies of the group members that results in more than mere aggregation. Through their support, opposition, and even apathy, every group member is a participant of the leadership phenomenon and they individually and collectively influence the group goal and to what extent it is actualized. As such, this dissertation is dedicated to understanding who the constituents of leadership really are and how leadership as a multilevel social phenomenon that is co-created by all group members actually works.

In this dissertation, I introduce the participatory theater framework (PTF) of leadership as a novel and holistic theoretical approach that can enable us to answer the questions above.

The participatory theater framework recognizes everyone in the group, including the leader and all forms of followers and non-followers, individually and collectively, as agentic performers of leadership. PTF is a constructionist theory that identifies audience roles as the mechanism through which individuals exert their agency, and therefore, co-create the leadership phenomenon. Deriving its foundations from various research areas such as social and cognitive psychology, moral philosophy, and game theory, this dissertation (i) establishes the theoretical foundation of the PTF and proposes a typology of roles people adopt in leadership situations, (ii) demonstrates that even those who are most commonly thought to be passive (i.e., devoted followers of toxic leaders; frequently called ‘sheep’) are indeed willful co-creators of the leadership phenomenon, and (iii) presents empirical evidence for the existence of the proposed typology of roles (Table 1.1).

Table 0.1: Dissertation chapters and their summaries

	Chapter # and Title	Summary
(i)	Chapter 2: The participatory theater framework of leadership	The theoretical foundations of the PTF: - The inclusive definition of leadership - Organizing constructs: audience, audience role, and audience role group - The multilevel flow model of leadership - Typology of audience roles (i.e., devoted follower, vigilant follower, covert follower, pragmatic follower, apathetic, survivor, dissenter, rebel) - Audience topology and its types (i.e.,

		leader-favoring majority, divided, neutral, leader-favoring minority)
(ii)	Chapter 3: Understanding the followers of toxic leaders	Why do individuals become and remain as devoted followers of toxic leaders? The social and cognitive mechanisms described in this chapter demonstrate that even the devoted followers of toxic leaders have agency and they are responsible for the outcomes of the toxic leadership.
(iii)	Chapter 4: Audience roles in leadership	Mixed methods empirical study to validate the audience role typology proposed in the second chapter: - First stage: coding the participants' open-ended descriptions of different group members in a typical social group (i.e., quantified the qualitative responses) - Second stage: discovered the roles that exist in the data (i.e., ran a series of latent class analyses of the coded data with MPlus software)

Clarification of the Key Constructs

Language reflects our priorities (Kramsch, 2014). Considering the leader-centric lenses of the dominant leadership theories, it is not surprising that a proper antonym for 'follower' is lacking in the English language. For example, the Merriam Webster dictionary identifies only two antonyms: 'leader' and 'coryphaeus', an archaic term meaning leader of a chorus or school of thought. I hesitantly use the term 'non-follower' to identify those group members who are neither the leader nor followers of the leader, although I find this term to be problematic from a definitional standpoint. The term simply positions these group members as contra-distinctive to followers rather than identifying them as belonging to a category of group members with its own descriptive and unique characteristics. Such

conceptualization of a social phenomenon as complex and dynamic as leadership results in a limited and convoluted understanding of it. More specifically, using a catch-all phrase of ‘followers’ to denote both the totality of the group and supporters of the leader interchangeably, obscures two different leadership related social identities: (i) group membership and (ii) attitudes and behaviors towards the leader. Disentangling membership of a group from a person’s attitudes towards the leader is critical because an individual can be a member of a group and share that social identity, but not necessarily endorse, support, or internalize the current leader. As such, we need both an inherently inclusive and impartial term for ‘all’ group members (i.e., audience) and a system to classify individuals according to their attitudes and behaviors towards the leader (i.e., audience role).

The leadership audience consists of individuals who share, or at least consider themselves to have a legitimate claim to, group membership and social identity. As such, membership in the audience is not something that must be granted or assigned, and neither leaders nor other influential agents can exclude individuals from the audience. Audience, therefore, includes all members of the group. Audience role, in turn, is the set of attitudes and behaviors that an individual adopts in a particular leadership context. Encompassing the whole range of positive and negative attitudes and behaviors as legitimate positions within the leadership, ‘audience role’ enables conceptualization of a variety of types beyond earlier ‘follower’ typologies. Furthermore, it is not an externally imposed construct but rather represents the motives and choices made by individuals. Contrary to assigned follower types based on the utility the individual provides in terms of achieving leader’s goals, audience roles enable us to account for strategic behaviors and avoid attribution bias.

Last but not least, audience roles are not a catalog of types for analyses' sake. Audience members adopt and enact these roles as the mechanism through which they participate in the leadership phenomenon and influence the goal setting and group performance through the enactment of their adopted role.

Recognizing the need for a theoretically robust distinction between group membership and individual's standpoint towards the leader requires a new conceptualization of leadership. This new framework should build on the constructivist idea of co-creation (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014), but also should transcend the current understanding in terms of laying out the mechanism of co-creation and inclusiveness of the set of legitimate co-creators. As such, I define the leadership phenomenon as "a vehicle for social identity-based collective agency" (Reicher et al., 2005, p. 547) in which each member of the audience participates through their adopted roles.

Dissertation Goals and Research Contributions

They say that 'you cannot write what Foucault wrote if you haven't lived his life.' I agree that our life experiences shape the way we see the world around us and allow us to study social phenomena from different perspectives. As a secular woman who lived her adolescence and early adulthood in an increasingly conservative country, my understanding of what it means to be in opposition to the leader is significantly different from the dominant discourse of leadership literature. More specifically, the fact that a person can oppose a leader and yet still strive for the best for the group seems very intuitive to me because I experienced it first-hand. I know plenty of people who are trying to survive by

keeping their head low. On the surface they might be considered as ‘reluctant followers’ who need a little encouragement to be more actively involved by the previous research, but I know that they do not only oppose the leader but also resist in small ways, strategically, to improve the group in some way. As such, while I was doing my readings for my qualifying exams, I realized that I did not fit the existing followership models and typologies. Furthermore, leadership is not only about the performance towards a preset ‘common goal’. Frequently, what is best for the group is a main domain of discussion not only during the emergence of the leader but also throughout his/her term. That is why I believe we need a better understanding of leadership that accounts for its dynamic co-creation processes as well as its co-creators, recognizing opposition and minority voices as legitimate participants of the phenomenon.

The main purpose of this dissertation, therefore, is to enhance our understanding of the constituents and the inner workings of leadership phenomena. To that end, I present a new conceptualization of leadership, participatory theater framework, that recognizes leadership is not the product of one individual but that it emerges from the individual and collective agencies within a group as members interact with, influence, clash, and accommodate each other. This new conceptualization includes an inclusive set of individuals, the mechanism through which these individuals participate in leadership, and a multi-level flow model of how leadership is created. It is important to note that such a shift in the paradigm of our understanding of leadership does not only have consequences for our scholarly studies of the phenomena, but also to its application through performative effects. In that regard, the participatory theater framework of leadership contributes to both research and practice of

leadership.

An extension of recognizing audience members as co-creators of leadership is returning the authority and responsibility to whom it belongs. As such, one of the main pillars of the PTF is that each audience member is an agent who makes decisions based on their needs, desires, and values and behaves accordingly. Yet, the agency of audience members is not always recognized by scholars, practitioners, press, and even the general public. Devoted followers of toxic leaders, in particular, are frequently considered to be passive bystanders that do not have a mind of their own (Tourish, 2013). That is why, in the third chapter of this dissertation, I focused on this particular case of leadership, demonstrating that even these individuals, who completely internalize the world view and the value system of the leader and almost blindly support the leader, do in fact exercise their agency and have responsibility for the outcomes of the leadership phenomenon. Therefore, a second contribution of this dissertation is the illustration of how (regardless of their attitudes and behaviors) audience members are willful agents and not some tool that leaders wield in order to get results.

Another aspect of the PTF is how audience roles are conceptualized differently from the existing ‘follower’ typologies. First of all, audience members’ roles are built on two theoretical dimensions (i.e., attitudes and behaviors towards the leader) instead of observed behaviors and individuals’ usefulness for achieving the leader's goals. Second, the PTF recognizes both positive and negative attitudes and behaviors as legitimate participation in leadership. Third, the PTF approach categorizes individuals based on their self-perception and, therefore, avoids attribution bias. Finally, audience roles are not mere categorizations

but also the mechanism of the audience members' participation. These four characteristics of the audience role enables a more comprehensive and functional typology of audience members than the existing typologies of 'followers'. More specifically, in Chapter 2, I propose a new theoretical typology of leadership constituents (i.e., devoted follower, vigilant follower, covert follower, pragmatic follower, apathetic, survivor, dissenter, rebel). In Chapter 4, I empirically test for the validity of this typology. The results of my mixed method study present strong support for the existence of an eight-role typology as well as the theoretical descriptions of each role. In that regard, a third contribution of this dissertation is a new and empirically tested typology of roles that individuals adopt and enact within leadership phenomena.

Furthermore, the participatory theater framework suggests that leadership is a multi-level phenomenon. Audience members participate in the leadership not only individually but also collectively together with people who have similar attitudes and behaviors towards the leader. Indeed, these individuals form sub-groups (i.e., audience role groups) within the audience and collaborate to further their own values and goals. This network of connections including both individual audience members and audience role groups as collective entities produce an audience topology. As the social network map of the audience, each topology has a unique distribution of audience members, and hence, audience role groups. When mapped over the two dimensions underlying an audience role (i.e., attitudes and behaviors towards the leader), the topology of an audience can provide us with a simple but powerful tool that helps us identify whether the audience is leader-favoring majority, divided, neutral, or leader-favoring minority, as well as critical attributes of each audience role

group such as their position on the XY plane and their distance to other role groups.

Therefore, a fourth contribution of this dissertation to leadership research and practice is the audience topology as a construct and a tool to understand the audience as a collective entity without having to regress the available information by aggregation.

Finally, this dissertation also contributes to the leadership literature in terms of methodology. More specifically, I employed two very distinct methodologies in my research: in Chapter 3, I used a narrative review approach in order to effectively synthesize the related knowledge from several vast literatures. The narrative review approach, when utilized correctly, can contribute significantly to theory development especially in highly multidisciplinary research areas, such as leadership. In Chapter 4, on the other hand, my research question demanded a methodology that would enable me to identify naturally occurring clusters of audience role prototypes. Therefore, I employed a mixed-method strategy that consisted of two parts: (i) collecting and coding participants' open-ended descriptions of group member types in a generic leadership setting, and (ii) exploring the role clusters within the coded data with a latent class analysis (LCA) model. As such, contrary to the externally constructed followership typologies that are commonly attributed to individuals in a top-down approach, the roles proposed by the PTF has been validated by the data in an unsupervised analysis. This methodology can contribute to future research in the leadership field, especially considering the profusion of empirically untested theoretical constructs in the area.

Overview of The Present Dissertation*1.1.1 Chapter 2*

The second chapter of this dissertation presents the participatory theater framework of leadership. More specifically, Chapter 2 introduces three organizing components to the literature: (i) audience as the complete set of group members, (ii) audience role as a recognizable social type (e.g., Klapp, 1954) characterized by a particular attitudinal and behavioral alignment towards the leader, and (iii) audience role group as clusters of individuals enacting similar roles. The PTF also proposes a multi-level flow model that details how these components interact on individual, sub-group, and group levels to create leadership outcomes. This chapter also includes a theoretical typology of audience roles (i.e., devoted follower, vigilant follower, covert follower, pragmatic follower, apathetic, survivor, dissenter, rebel) and a discussion about audience topologies (i.e., a social map of networks within and between sub-groups) and its different types (i.e., leader-favoring majority, divided, neutral, leader-favoring minority).

1.1.2 Chapter 3

The third chapter of this dissertation introduces the *illusio* perspective (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) in a process-relational context to the toxic leadership discussion. The aim of the chapter is to (i) explicate the allure of toxic leaders by addressing it as an incentive for followers to join the toxic *illusio* as a way of coping with their high personal uncertainty, (ii) synthesize the extant literature to illustrate the mechanisms and processes that combine together and motivate followers of toxic leaders to remain in the toxic *illusio* once they join. In this context, the chapter also briefly discusses and differentiates between

the ethical and moral dimensions of toxic leadership. Additionally, Chapter 3 demonstrates the individual level of PTF, in particular, how role adoption, enactment and refinement take place in a specific context. Cognitive and social psychological mechanisms differ among audience roles and Chapter 3 serves as a showcase of how these mechanisms work in the case of devoted followers.

1.1.3 Chapter 4

The fourth chapter of this dissertation investigates the existence of supporting and opposing audience roles as prototypes based on individuals' attitudes and behaviors towards the leader. The mixed methods study presented in this chapter addresses the call for empirical research on the nature of 'followership' (Blom & Lundgren, 2020; Collinson, 2018) by searching for evidence for the existence of polyphonic audience roles and their associated prototypes. The results of the latent class analysis supports the existence of audience role prototypes up to eight latent classes (i.e., devoted follower, pragmatic follower, conditional follower, work-focused follower, benign apathetic, harmful apathetic, dissenter, revolutionary). Furthermore, these audience roles are nested within superordinate roles (e.g., 'devoted follower' is a subset of the higher-level role 'supporter') and remain robust across degrees of aggregation (e.g., 'benign apathetic' and 'harmful apathetic' are first identified in four latent class model and remained virtually the same in five, six, seven, and eight latent class models) as asserted by the PTF.

1.1.4 Chapter 5

In chapter five, I summarize, integrate, and discuss the main tenets and theoretical and

practical implications of the earlier chapters of this dissertation. In this chapter, I also identify potential research avenues PTF opens up as well as the ways in which PTF can contribute and improve existing research on leadership.

Finally, I would like to note that each chapter of this dissertation is written as an independent article and therefore can be read independently of the rest of the dissertation. As a result, the reader may encounter some commonalities and repetitions among the chapters.

*Chapter 2***THE PARTICIPATORY THEATER FRAMEWORK OF
LEADERSHIP**

The history of the leadership literature is one of examining the subject through consecutive but restrictive prisms, each giving disproportionate weight to some aspects of the phenomenon while ignoring others: from leader centric views of great man theories (e.g., Carlyle, 1841) and transformational leadership (e.g., Burns, 1978) to follower-centric views in which the leader is the instrument or moderator of follower influence (e.g., Carsten et al., 2010; Sy, 2010) or that leadership is constructed by followers (e.g., Hogg, 2001; Meindl, 1995). Recent models and process theories strive to incorporate the contribution to the leadership phenomenon of both leaders and followers (e.g., Foti et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2016). Most notably, the constructivist approach conceptualizes a social process in which individuals co-create leadership and followership through individual and collective agencies (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014; see also DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Epitropaki et al., 2017). Nevertheless, as Collinson and Tourish observe, most prominent theories still “pay insufficient attention to the [...] significance of follower dissent and resistance” (2015, p. 576).

I propose a new participatory theater framework (PTF) of leadership in which leadership is a phenomenon that emerges from the interactions of leader(s), followers, and non-followers

who are all simultaneously actors and an ‘audience’ to leadership. In the dramaturgical genre of participatory theater, audience members are active participants of the performance, and they shape the plot with their actions (Coghlan & Brydon-Miller, 2014). I see ‘participatory theater’ as a fitting analogy for my understanding of leadership because it emphasizes both the co-creation of leadership as a collective phenomenon and the agency of audience members as actors in their own right.

In the PTF, audience members choose a role to enact based on their attitudes and behaviors towards the leader. Following Mead (1934) and social constructivist approaches (e.g., Blumer, 1969; Stryker, 1980), I propose that a limited number of intuitive audience roles have evolved out of people’s social experiences, interactions, categorization and typing processes (Klapp, 1954). These roles form a natural, intuitive typology of devoted or vigilant followers, covert followers, pragmatists, rebels, dissenters, survivors, and apathetics. Further, in large enough groups the distribution of these roles will coalesce into groups of like-minded individuals, producing a topology of the networks of connections within and between sub-groups. The audience topology might be more polarized or neutral, and leaders might be supported by majorities or only a small number of powerful actors. Accordingly, in the PTF leadership is the compilation of various agencies and the framework itself functions as a multi-level flow model that operates simultaneously at and across individual (role), sub-group (role group), and group (audience) levels. In the PTF, I argue that these roles and their topology are relevant to leadership regardless of their various orientations because leadership is the product of their countervailing and accommodating forces. I reconfigure the conceptualization of leadership from a future-

oriented focus grounded in the leader and / or followers' vision and goals, which lends itself more naturally to the binary construction of good and bad followers, to the more immediate reality of leadership as an emergent phenomenon. Nevertheless, the PTF is not merely present focused but can also be used to forecast future states and events, determine goals, and design change or implementation strategies.

To visualize how the PTF and audience roles can advance our understanding of the constituents of leadership, let's imagine the president of a university. In all likelihood, some faculty members will sympathize with their president, whereas others will not. More specifically, some faculty members will agree with, and therefore support, the vision and actions of the president (devoted or vigilant follower). Other faculty members will choose to appear as supporters due to a prospect of funding or a chair, or alternatively the potential repercussions of losing opportunities or resources (pragmatist). Some faculty members may truly disagree with the president but continue to go along with his or her leadership, because they believe that their research or teaching is too important to be disrupted by quarrels with the president (survivor). Even still, some faculty members might believe that the president's vision and actions are harmful for themselves, science, the university and/or students; hence, they challenge the president on his or her actions to a varying degree (dissenter or rebel). Finally, some faculty may be completely indifferent towards the president and his or her leadership, not really taking notice of the president of the university and his or her activities (apathetic). Further, the audience topology of role groups may be such that a majority of faculty supports the university president with only a handful of opposers, or the faculty members might be polarized into more radical camps of opposition

and support.

My conceptualization of audience and roles improves upon existing typologies that are premised on the value that followers offer to leaders and organizations (Crossman & Crossman, 2011) (e.g., Kelley, 1988: ‘star followers’ and ‘alienated’; J. Steger et al., 1982: ‘superfollowers’ and ‘deviants’). The PTF also answers the call of Collinson (2005, 2006) by recognizing non-followers as legitimate influencers and constituents of the leadership phenomenon.

The PTF addresses several issues in the leadership literature. First, opposing or silent individuals are contributors, not obstacles to be overcome, transformed, or expelled (Ford & Harding, 2018). Second, these individuals may have relevant perspectives and opinions that can improve the group’s leadership process. Construing these actors and their behavior solely through a restrictive lens of ideal followership may lead to the denial of their perspectives and, consequently, the loss of benefit from their input. Third, considering individuals primarily in terms of observable behaviors does not effectively consider their varied intentions and attitudes, and may frequently lead to attribution errors. Finally, denying the agency and legitimacy of these individuals does not eliminate their influence but it can impair other audience members’ awareness of the process, such that they become willingly unaware of how they themselves change and adapt to opposition.

The inclusive PTF approach provides a better and more functional understanding of the emergence and effectiveness of leaders, as well as the processes and mechanisms of

leadership. Further, the role constructs and role group topologies can be easily operationalized and measured, providing opportunities for novel empirical explorations. The PTF can more precisely address important questions of context and leadership style, leadership strategy, goal achievement and conflict management. For instance, transformational leadership is assumed to have a uniform positive effect on all group members, and typically assessed this effect in the aggregate. The PTF provides a more nuanced approach that enables researchers and practitioners to differentiate between the reactions of followers and non-followers, including individuals' shifts from one role to another, thereby identifying the mechanisms by which transformational leadership has its effect. Further, goal achievement and conflict management strategies should differ depending on the audience topology, or the distribution and population of supporting and non-supporting roles in a social group. For instance, a leader faced with a polarized audience of devoted follower and rebel role groups may feel that the best approach is to try to dominate or eliminate the opposing group. However, according to the PTF, an alternative approach is to neutralize the conflict by encouraging the development of alternative intermediate roles. Rather than forcing compliance or compromise between the two extreme camps, the presence of intermediate roles provides opportunities for a broader discussion and a more integrative solution. Such insights from the PTF will positively impact group and employee productivity and citizenship, and contribute to improved design of institutions, leadership processes, leader training, and audience interventions.

This chapter introduces the participatory theater framework of leadership. First, I define and explain leadership as participatory theater. I introduce the PTF's multi-level flow

model and further explain the function of individual and collective agency. Second, I define and explicate the key constructs of the PTF: audience, audience role, audience role group, and audience topology. I also introduce my audience role typology and the possible forms that the audience topology can take. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of future research avenues that are made possible by the PTF, and also its current limitations.

Leadership as Participatory Theater: A New Analogy

From Plato's *Philosopher King* (1998) and Hobbes' *Leviathan* (2002) to Burns' *Transformational Leadership* (1978) and Avolio's *Authentic Leadership* (2004), study of leadership has been overwhelmingly leader centric. Despite this long and dominant tradition of leader-centric approaches (i.e., "followers as recipients or moderators of leader influence in producing outcomes"), the field of leadership research also produced smaller research streams that argue leadership is a follower-centric (i.e., "followers construct leaders and leadership") (e.g., Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Hogg, 2001; Meindl, 1995; Phillips & Lord, 1981), relational (i.e., "followers engage with leaders in a mutual influence process") (e.g., Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; E. P. Hollander & Julian, 1969; Lord & Brown, 2001; Oc & Bashshur, 2013; Weierner, 1997) or a role-based phenomenon (i.e., "leader as recipient or moderator of follower influence in producing outcomes") (e.g., Carsten et al., 2010; Howell & Shamir, 2005; Sy, 2010). Although these research avenues allow a greater room for followership relative to the leader-centric theories, none of them captures both the complexity of the leadership dynamics and the balance between the influences of different factors on leadership processes. The more recent constructivist approach to leadership, on the other hand, provides a more "balanced" framework that

allows a deeper understanding of the phenomenon by conceptualizing leadership as “a social process in which individuals co-create leadership and followership” (DeRue & Ashford, 2010, p. 94; see also Collinson, 2005; Fairhurst & Uhl-Bien, 2012; Shamir, 2007). Describing the interactive and reciprocal processes of leadership and followership identity co-creation (for a more detailed review of leader – follower identity processes, see Epitropaki et al., 2017), constructivist approach transforms followers from mediums to agents, while maintaining the balance between leader, followers and context within the leadership processes.

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines an analogy as ‘a comparison of two otherwise unlike things based on resemblance of a particular aspect.’ Analogies are generated, and have generative capacity, when they are grounded in deep structural similarities (Bearman et al., 2007; Blanchette & Dunbar, 2000). Through analogical mapping from a source to a target, new aspects of the target can be discovered, existing target features can be manipulated and rearranged, and more distinct insights into the target can be communicated (Dunbar, 1999). As tools that transfer meaning from source to target (Ortony, 1975; Tsoukas, 1991), analogies are used to conceptualize, explore, understand, elaborate, and explain complex ideas or problems (Oswick et al., 2002; T. Steger, 2007). Analogies have practical value for discovery of novel insight (Dunbar, 1999), problem-solving (Bearman et al., 2007), and the development and execution of strategy (Gavetti & Rivkin, 2005) because they provide both the means for creative, disciplined thought (Morgan, 1986) and roadmaps to the future that are infused with cognitive, emotional, and behavioral meaning (Sackmann, 1989).

Using role theory's theater analogy (Hindin, 2007), the traditional understanding of leadership can be understood as the leader occupying centerstage whilst the audience of followers remains largely in the dark, valued mostly for their applause. As an actor on stage would perceive a booing member of the audience as malevolent or ignorant, so the extant literature mainly depicts non-followers as obstacles, inefficiencies, or irritants that should be corrected so that they can become productive members of the group (Ford & Harding, 2018). Even in the constructivist approach, in which the agentic follower roles are defined through a process of claiming and granting, the only valid and legitimate roles are those that support the current group ethos and leader's goals. An alternative perspective from the resistance literature suggests that individuals who don't agree with the leader or the group's dominant views or activities, for example whistleblowers (Henik, 2015; Jubb, 1999), can have a significant effect on group processes and outcomes (Brown & Humphrey, 2006; J. Hollander & Einwöhner, 2004).

The current leadership literature leaves some fundamental questions about leadership phenomena unanswered, such as: (i) what the inclusive scope of the leader's audience is; (ii) what distinguishes the variety of audience roles, or ways in which members enact their identity within the group; and (iii) how and through what mechanisms do audience members influence the leadership processes and outcomes. By introducing a comprehensive and nuanced view of the leadership constituencies, the PTF provides more precise and accurate answers to these questions. Consequently, this chapter contributes to the literature by both compelling the leadership research to acknowledge and incorporate all members of the audience into extant models and conceptualizations of leadership

phenomena and by suggesting a new theoretical framework to achieve this on individual, sub-group, and group levels.

The starting point for a more holistic view of leadership constituencies is to define leadership so that it is not synonymous with the leader. Building on the constructivist idea of co-creation, I define the leadership phenomenon as “a vehicle for social identity-based collective agency” (Reicher et al., 2005, p. 547) in which each member of the audience participates through their assumed roles. In the participatory theater framework all members of the audience, including the leader and all forms of followers and non-followers, perform agency through their adoption and enactment of audience roles.

Context also matters. Leadership is not merely the collective agency of the group but can be affected by external stakeholders and environmental factors, or social dimensions defining the group, including power and social structures of governance. For example, audience members may influence leadership processes and outcomes more effectively in democratic than in hierarchical and autocratic societies and groups. Nevertheless, under any conditions, audience members survey their situation and determine a course of action, whether it be silence, support, or resistance, and thereby adopt what they feel to be an optimal role. Although the participatory theater framework will apply regardless of context and external influences, for the sake of parsimony, in this chapter I focus on the primary and fundamental question of how leadership is produced by intragroup forces.

Collective agency emerges from the clash and interplay of different goals and visions of the audience members, expressed through roles. Accordingly, the PTF does not evaluate different opinions and behaviors as beneficial or obstructing, but simply as co-creating forces. All group members are both audience to leadership and individually in search of a defined audience role to play.

1.1.5 The PTF Leadership Model

I conceptualize the leadership process as a multilevel flow model (Figure 2.1) that operates simultaneously at and across individual, sub-group, and group levels. My model unpacks and specifies the over-generalized “follower effect” of most recent leadership models (e.g., Antonakis et al., 2012; Tuncdogan et al., 2017), and thereby more adequately captures all the complex dynamics of individual and collective agencies of the audience.

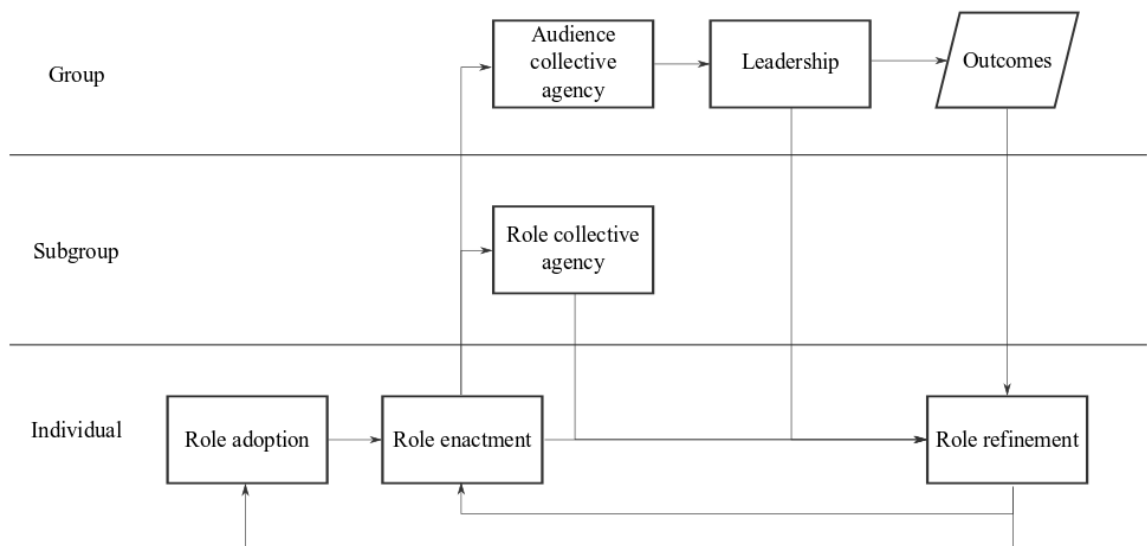


Figure 0.1: Multi-level leadership flow model of the PTF

Taking the social actor as the focus, I describe my proposed model starting with the individual who assesses the environment, determines some level of attitudinal and behavioral alignment, and prepares to take a role in the leadership phenomenon. Next, the individual enacts that role, thereby contributing his or her individual agency to the collective agencies of the role sub-group and audience group. The collective agencies of the role subgroups independently contribute to the audience collective agency. Leadership emerges from these effects of discrete and compiled agencies, producing outcomes. Finally, the individual refines his or her role based on feedback from self-reflection, interactions with other role actors, the compiled audience, and the emergent leadership, as well as relevant leadership outcomes.

In the participatory theater framework, agency is compiled at the different levels to express an effect that contains the different parts and the whole itself. In other words, the effect of role subgroup collective agency comprises both the subgroup agency and the individual agency of each subgroup member. Similarly, the audience collective agency comprises the effect of the whole audience, the role subgroups, and, at this level, the individual agencies of the person as individual, role group member, and audience member.

Through role refinement, the individual can adapt and revise role performance, or select an entirely different role to enact. For instance, a person who has supported the leader of his or her group and been satisfied with leadership and outcomes may be surprised by some revelation of the conduct of the leader, the unintended impact of outcomes, or by change in context that then prompts the individual to reflect on circumstances and his or her role,

reconsider attitudinal and behavioral alignment, and then re-engage through a specific role enactment.

1.1.6 Agency: Individual and Collective

Collinson suggests that “by recognizing followers as skilled and knowledgeable agents, I can begin to see that they have at their disposal a repertoire of possible agencies” (2018, p. 271). Similarly, Swann and Jetten recently defined individual agency as a person’s “capacity and intention to control their own behavior and outcomes by assessing the situation and determining how best to reach their goals while remaining faithful to their beliefs and dispositions” (2017, p. 382). Individual agency is of the individual’s own volition, in accordance with their values, advantages and disadvantages, needs, desires, and fears; it is neither coerced nor contingent upon the approval or dispensation of others. In fact, agency can be considered a fundamental motive (Bandura, 2006). Even in contexts where individuals are denied voice, they still strive for an agentic role in society and may form networks of like-minded persons to achieve desired outcomes (Swann & Jetten, 2017).

Collective agency, whether at the level of the sub or whole group, is the compilation of cooperating and clashing individual agencies that results in more than mere aggregation (c.f. Lord & Dinh, 2012). Defining collective agency as the polyphony of different individual agencies accounts for the coordinated and synergistic aspects of the group as well as the influence of different visions, values, and interests of the group members. Accordingly, the collective agency of the earlier example of a university’s faculty

comprises the whole range of individual judgements held by the members of the faculty and the role groups that they form. The university president's leadership processes, as well as its outcomes, is shaped and realized by the nature and the composition of that collective agency.

At any given time, the attitudes and behaviors underlying individual and collective agency remain relatively fixed. Once people have determined their stance towards a particular leader, they may act heuristically and apply these same attitudes and behavioral response patterns to other issues (e.g., Lind, 2001). For instance, in the context of our university example, an apathetic faculty member does not choose to be indifferent towards each and every single issue or topic, but rather is characterized by an overarching mien of indifference towards the phenomenon as a whole. Likewise, a faculty member who supports the university president due to the prospect of funding or a chair is likely to play a generally supportive role in the university leadership across issues such as hiring policy or student relations.

Notably, the assertion that individual and group agencies are durable does not preclude them from remaining dynamic. Individual group members can still update their attitudinal and behavioral alignment as they process the decisions and actions of the leader and other group members, as well as evolving circumstances. Consequently, despite being generalizable across issues at a given time, individual and collective agency may still shift and change over time.

Key Components of the Framework

Within the working analogy of a participatory theater, I introduce three organizing components to the literature as the mechanisms through which agency is performed: (i) audience as the complete set of agents; (ii) audience role as a recognizable social type (e.g., Klapp, 1954) characterized by a particular attitudinal and behavioral alignment towards the leader; and (iii) audience role group as clusters of individuals enacting similar roles. The PTF utilizes these components to frame leadership as a phenomenon in which all members of the audience perform agency through their adoption and enactment of audience roles in order to contribute to a particular leadership instance. I took the leader as the target of attitudinal and behavioral alignment because, even though leadership is a product of collective agency, the leader is the primary agent and must be engaged with in order to achieve goals or implement change in a social group.

1.1.7 Audience

Who constitutes the audience of a leadership phenomenon? A necessary precondition of being an audience member is social identity, defined as an “individual’s knowledge that he belongs to certain social groups together with some emotional and value significance to him of this group membership” (Tajfel, 1972, p. 292). I take Turner’s approach (Turner, 1982; Turner & Reynolds, 2011) to social identity as a self-categorization process, but consider the emotional and value significance of social identity to be separate from the cognitive process of categorization. In practice, a person could have positive, neutral, or negative attitudes about being a member of the group. I also distinguish between self-reflective categorization and attitudes about the group’s dominant value system. A person

can be a member of a group and share that social identity, but not necessarily endorse, support, or internalize the dominant values of the group. Individuals may then have differing attitudes about a particular group, and those attitudes will inform their audience role and enactment.

The leadership audience, therefore, consists of individuals who share, or at least consider themselves to have a legitimate claim to, group membership and social identity. As such, membership in the audience is not something that must be granted or assigned, and neither leaders nor other influential agents can categorically exclude individuals from the audience. In that sense, anyone who has an incentive to adopt a role relative to a specific leadership phenomenon is also a part of the audience. An example of such role claiming in the audience is the Suffragettes, who contended for the acknowledgement of women's place in the political audience through voting rights (Harper, 1922).

To summarize, I define participation in leadership as a volitional act, and offer social identity as its mechanism and motivator. Consequently, I assert that the audience of a leadership consists of individuals who have a relevant social identity, as they recognize the significance to themselves of the said leadership phenomenon and are motivated to exert their agency to influence its processes and outcomes. As such, the audience is a dynamic and autonomous set of individuals that morphs and transforms in both size and compilation as individuals join, participate, and leave.

1.1.8 Audience Alignment Dimensions

Now that I have discussed who participates in leadership, we can turn our attention to what participation means for an individual member of the audience. I argue in the participatory theater approach that audience members are not unidimensional mirrors reflecting the leader's will in their own behaviors. Indeed, observed behavior is not necessarily a clear and sufficient indicator of how the individual sees his or her own role. An individual may support the leader through actions but hold attitudes and intentions that do not always correspond with those actions. This discrepancy between observable behavior and internal states allows for inadvertent attribution errors and the possibility of strategic impression management (Podsakoff et al., 2000). For example, an audience member who opposes the leader may choose to comply for reasons including fear, a strong sense of duty, or a concern over disrupting the social order. Likewise, an audience member who is loyal to the leader may choose to challenge or disobey any directives or guidance that they believe to be misguided or wrong. Consequently, I argue that there are two main dimensions of an individual's alignment with the leader: (i) attitudinal and (ii) behavioral.

In the PTF, there are two sub-dimensions of attitudinal alignment: (i) value congruence, and (ii) the fit of psychological or material goals and outcomes. This distinction between values as the individuals' moral and social preferences about what is good, beneficial, and desirable and what is not (Cambridge Dictionary, n.a.) and goals as an idea of the future or desired result that a person or a group of people envision, plan and commit to achieve (Locke & Latham, 1990) is well established in organizational science. For instance, a similar distinction can be found in the person-organization fit literature as value congruence

and goal congruence (Hoffman & Woehr, 2006; Kristof, 1996; Supeli & Creed, 2014). In practice, this means that members of the audience may have high levels of attitudinal alignment if their values and vision congrue with those of the leader, if the leader provides desired outcomes, or both. Further, goals and outcomes can benefit the individual but also the group or collective, and individuals will vary on how much they care about either or both.

The second dimension of the individual's alignment with the leader is behavior. Audience members' verbal and non-verbal behaviors, including passivity, are the expression of their agency. For instance, an act of staring directly into the eyes of one's supervisor may express challenge or communicate devoted attention. Nevertheless, actual intentions may remain private, allowing for strategic and ironic action. Leaders tend to objectify subordinates (Gruenfeld et al., 2008) and so may be blind to subtle differences in behavior and expression. An employee may falsely signal compliance to his or her supervisor in a way that is simultaneously an inside joke to co-workers, effectively signaling support to the leader and solidarity with non-follower colleagues. Moreover, individuals' intentions are not always perfectly realized. Misunderstandings and unintended consequences mean that observers may only perceive what happened instead of what the agent intended to happen. Further, people's perceptions change according to their own shifting attitudes and goals, or because of changes in the context. Therefore, although others' perceptions and feedback about their behavior are crucial for an audience member's self-evaluation and future decision making, internal states including intentions and values can be accurately assessed by no one other than the audience members themselves.

There are two sub-dimensions of audience members' behavioral alignment with the leader: intention and character of activity. An individual may intend his or her behavior to sustain, enable, and promote the leader, or resist, oppose, and obstruct the leader. Intentions can be expressed through activities that can be characterized as passive, active, or proactive.

Accordingly, proactive audience members are change agents who take initiative and go the extra mile; active audience members perform to the best of their abilities to support or resist the leader; and passive audience members are identified more with quiescence and complacency, or lack of reaction (Carsten et al., 2010). Taken together, these two dimensions of audience members' behavioral alignment with the leader can be arranged into six categories: proactive support, active support, passive support, passive resistance, active resistance, and proactive resistance (Table 2.1).

Table 0.1: Examples for behavioral alignment categories

	Support	Resistance
Passive	Lack of reaction as tacit consent. Doing the minimum requirements or sometimes even less	Resist in small ways that cannot be detected, such as intentionally slowing down processes
Active	Participation and active conformity, promoting the leader and his/her vision	Relatively conventional and active resistance and opposition, protesting the leader and his/her vision
Proactive	Support, but also suggestions and critical feedback, taking initiative	Vocal, willing to take risks, challenge or violate norms to create change

To summarize, the PTF proposes that the observed behavioral patterns of audience members do not necessarily indicate their attitudinal alignment. Therefore, contrary to the conventional follower typologies in the leadership literature, I offer audience dimensions that capture the multidimensional nature of an individual's orientation to the leader and his or her vision. I identify two main dimensions, each with two sub-dimensions: attitudinal (value congruence; goals and outcomes fit) and behavioral (intention; character of activity). Returning to my multi-level leadership flow model in Figure 2.1, these dimensions combine as audience roles that constitute a reciprocal co-creation mechanism for (i) communicating the individual's agency to the group and subgroup levels, and (ii) receiving the group's and subgroup's influences and mediating the effect of those on the individual's role selection, role enactment, and role refinement processes.

1.1.9 Audience Roles

Follower typologies, unfortunately for the most part is constructed based on the value that followers offer to leaders and organizations and do not reflect an individual with independent agency (Crossman & Crossman, 2011; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Although Zaleznik (1965) initially discussed power dynamics from followers' point of view; starting with "the most influential" (Crossman & Crossman, 2011) and "most cited work" (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014) on followership, Kelley (1988), follower typologies were formed from the perspective of the leader and/or the organization. In that sense, predominance of the previous typologies (e.g., Chaleff, 1995; Kelley, 1988; Lipman-Blumen, 2005c; Potter & Rosenbach, 2006; J. Steger et al., 1982) categorize followers according to their desirability from the standpoint of the leader/organization. In fact, based on this desirability criterion

we can identify follower types from both ends of the spectrum. On one end, there is a common theme of an ideal follower, that is proactive, inquisitive and independent, who would proactively engage to the leader's vision and provide constructive criticism when necessary (e.g., star followers (Kelley, 2008), superfollower (Steger et al., 1982) and partner (Chaleff, 1995; Potter & Rosenbach, 2006)). On the other end, the least desirable followers were characterized as being low on those same dimensions, for instance "low levels of commitment and effectiveness" (Crossman & Crossman, 2011, p. 488). These "bad" followers do not believe in or care about the leader's vision, and therefore in this model they either do not contribute or they obstruct its advancement (e.g., deviant (Steger et al., 1982), alienated (Kelley, 2008), or subordinate (Potter & Rosenbach, 2006) all of whom needs to be corrected and reintegrated into society). Although there are follower typologies in the literature that focus on motivations (Kellerman, 2007) and role orientations (Howell & Mendez, 2008) separately, no framework is yet to combine the individual's agency, and hence motivations and role orientations, from the individual's own perspective. Insisting on the normative goal of achieving the leader's vision, the current literature does not offer insight into how and why people adopt different roles within the same leadership phenomenon, let alone how these roles interact with each other to create the collective agency that shapes the leadership. In fact, by defining the individuals that do not share the "common purpose" of leadership categorically as non-ideal, the current literature ignores a vital portion of the collective agency of the group and its influence (both directly towards the leader and indirectly through its effect on followers) even from a leader-centric perspective.

On appearance, an exception to this trend is the followers in destructive leadership literature (e.g., Padilla et al., 2007; Thoroughgood et al., 2012). It's important to note that, meta-theoretically, destructive leadership literature overlaps with the conventional theories, in the sense that leadership itself tends to be assessed from the standpoint of the benefit to the organization, which in the case of destructive leaders does not align with the organization's interests. Therefore, the typologies focus on the ways these followers enable the destructive leaders, instead of why they adopt those roles.

I define an audience role as the set of attitudes and behaviors that an individual adopts in a particular leadership context. Consequently, audience roles are not externally imposed constructs but rather represent the motives and choices made by individuals. Nevertheless, I contend that there exists an innate typology of potential audience roles from which to choose. As social beings we have an intrinsic understanding of groups and social arrangements such as hierarchies in which a leader and others are organized according to relative status (de Waal, 1982). Following Mead (1934) and other social constructionists (Blumer, 1969; Stryker, 2006, 1980), I propose that, through their everyday experiences in groups, people acquire a conceptualization of prototypical roles that are grounded in basic dimensions of alignment towards the leader of the group. This idea that 'types' exist in social situations is also well-established in literary tropes and sociology (e.g., Klapp, 1954). Notably, each individual will have his or her own understanding of a particular audience and its constituency; other audience members might perceive the legitimacy and availability roles differently. Much like Mead's (1934) baseball team analogy, role enactment is not just observable behavior but is also contingent upon the role holder's

cognizance and interpretation of others' role enactment and intentions, and others' reception of his or her own role enactment and intentions.

Roles are not always a perfect fit. Individuals' attitudinal alignment may not always perfectly match with their behavioral expression, giving rise to a need to justify their actions to themselves. For instance, low power individuals who are dependent on a leader may be reluctant to express or act on their dissenting views. The discrepancy between attitudes towards the leader and a particular individual's best course of action can cause cognitive dissonance, which is a state of tension due to conflicting attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors (Festinger, 1957) that can produce significant 'self-threat' (Holland et al., 2002). Since individuals are inclined to protect a positive self-image (Steele, 1988), when faced with such a threat they might resort to self-justification mechanisms. Whether an individual can or cannot justify behaviors associated with an audience role is an important criterion in the role adoption process. For example, imagine two junior faculty members who equally disapprove of the president of the university. One may feel compelled to adopt an 'dissenter' role and easily justify that choice, whereas the other may struggle to justify either dissent or compliance and consequently adopt a 'survivor' role.

Furthermore, justification may be an ongoing process. Individuals may change their perspective, a leader's course of action can diverge from its initial path, an audience may become more or less polarized, institutions that govern leadership may weaken or strengthen, or the distribution of power within a group may shift. Additionally, the behavioral demands of audience roles can also change with time, for instance calling for

more extreme expression under polarized conditions. Consequently, the disparity between the individual's attitudinal alignment and the audience roles' behavioral patterns may increase or decrease over time. Nevertheless, it is important to note that audience roles are generally stable through time.

1.1.10 Audience Typology

In this section I present my typology of audience roles, using the university president context for illustration. I define the following roles: devoted followers; vigilant followers; pragmatic supporters; covert followers; apathetics; survivors; dissenters; and rebels (Table 2.2, Figure 2.2). Although Figure 2.2 is a two-dimensional representation, the audience typology can also be considered as multidimensional clusters.

Table 0.2: Audience role typology

	Attitude		Behavior	
	Values	Goals / Outcomes	Intention / Motivation	Activity
Devoted Follower	embraces leader's values	devoted to realization of leader's goals	high support; trusts judgment; does not question decisions and directives	spends time, effort and resources to actively support leader; defends leader against critics

Vigilant Follower	mainly agrees with leader's values	mainly agrees with and supports leader's goals	supports the leader to best of ability; feels it is his/her duty to keep leaders on track	offers proactive feedback (warns, offers constructive criticism)
Covert Follower	mainly agrees with leader's values	mainly agrees with and supports leader's goals	to avoid the cost of being labeled as a supporter of the leader	passive support through covert acts
Pragmatic Follower	no strong attitude about leader's values	leader and opportunities are good personally	supports so long as the policies of the leader aligns with their personal goals	spends effort and resources to ensure continuation and/or realization of benefits
Apathetic	doesn't really care about leader's values	doesn't really care about leader's goals	may believe their involvement does not matter	passive support through tacit consent
Survivor	disagrees with leader's values	disagrees with leader's goals	to survive with least damage to themselves, group, institutions	passive resistance; does not put themselves out
Dissenter	strongly opposes leader's values	strongly opposes leader's goals	wants their opposition to be heard; public about their attitude	actively pursues policy change and reforms by conventional means
Rebel	rejects leader's legitimacy	rejects leader's legitimacy	sees a dire need for a dramatic, urgent change	risk personal costs or harm to resist leader

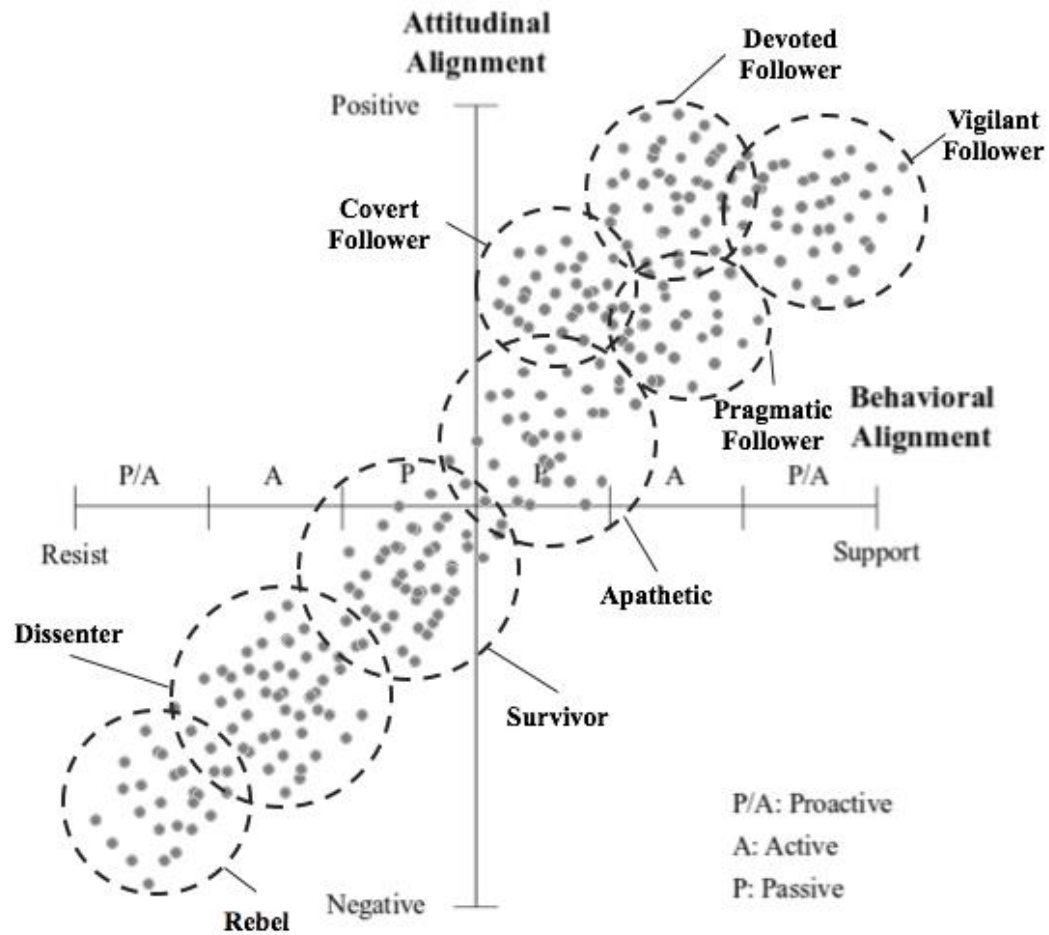


Figure 0.2: Audience typology mapped on alignment dimensions

Devoted followers have very high levels of congruence with the leader's values, goals and outcomes and they actively support him or her with their behaviors. They adopt the leader's vision as their own and can see him or her as the objectified origin of their own values and vision (Arendt, 1951). They trust the leader and his or her judgements, and so, they are highly unlikely to question his or her decisions and directives. Devoted followers spend time, effort and other resources (and sometimes make sacrifices) to enthusiastically support and promote the leader and will defend him or her against any critics. As their attitudinal

alignment matches their behavioral alignment to a great extent, devoted followers require very little self-justification.

Devoted followers in our university president context can be a junior faculty member or a student who admires the president due to his or her values and performance as a leader.

They might accept the university president as their role model and internalize his or her worldview and value system, as they perceive it to be. Moreover, the junior faculty member might be grateful for the president's benevolence and the student might be confident about benefiting from the president's vision for the university. Dedicated to the president's vision for the university and its members, they are likely to do everything in their power to support and further the president's cause. The junior faculty member might actively facilitate behaviors and outcomes aligned with the president's expectations in class and among colleagues, and the student might praise and promote the university president and his/her policies among peers.

Vigilant followers have mid to high levels of attitudinal alignment with the leader, and they proactively support him or her with their behaviors. They perceive the leader as an agent and instrument of what they believe to be the group's will and common good.

Vigilant followers will enthusiastically support a leader on condition that their own pre-existing stance on values, goals, and vision overlaps with the leader's. They are proactive in the sense that they view "their roles as partnering with leaders by taking ownership and accountability for achieving organizational objectives" (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014, p. 91), and hence may try to correct the leader through warnings and constructive criticism or

withdraw support from straying leaders. Notably, vigilant (or “courageous”) followers are valued in the literature for their “intelligent disobedience” (Chaleff, 2015) that keeps their leaders honest and on the right path. Nonetheless, leaders prefer unquestioning followers (Kelley, 2008) and, indeed, there are considerable personal risks to the vigilant follower role (e.g., whistleblowing, Miceli & Near, 2002).

Examples of vigilant followers in the context of the university president can be a faculty or administration member who principally agrees with the president’s vision for the university and proactively supports him or her to the best of their abilities. These individuals might take initiatives and put in extra effort to further their common goals necessary to realize the leadership vision. They might offer solutions and advice to the president regarding possible roadblocks on the way to the shared leadership vision, or spearhead campaigns and raise funds to generate higher support for projects and initiatives among faculty, students, and the general public. Importantly, they might also criticize and admonish the university president if his or her decisions and behaviors diverge from their shared values and vision for the university, even possibly to the extent that would be perceived as opposition by the leader and other followers.

Pragmatic supporters have low value congruence with the leader but a strong fit on goals and outcomes. They will actively support the leader, deploying resources and effort, as long as they find the leader succeeds in achieving those goals.

Consider a faculty member who receives extra funding or publicity due to initiatives

championed by the university president. Although they do not completely agree with the president's values or vision, they find that the benefits they accrue are significant enough to make them sympathetic towards him or her. Another example would be a faculty member who overall does not agree with the president but acknowledges some outcomes that benefit the common good, for instance in hiring or benefits policies. If they believe that showcasing their support will positively further their goals, pragmatic supporters might publicly vouch for and promote the president's policies.

Apathetics are indifferent about the values and goals of the leader, but they passively support the leader through disinterest and complacency. Apathetics share the categorical social identity and hence are members of the audience, but they do not really care about the leader or leadership phenomenon and are not motivated to form an opinion about values and vision. They may consider the leadership's goals and outcomes to be insignificant or believe that their involvement would not make a difference. In general, apathetics perform the minimum required of them to maintain their standing within the group. Their lack of reaction and engagement translates into tacit consent to the incumbent leader.

Examples of apathetics in the context of the university president might be a staff member who is only interested in getting a paycheck or a student who wants to earn a degree with the least amount of involvement in anything about the university. They might comply with the rules of the university, perhaps minimally so, and do not take it upon themselves to actively support or resist any policies or initiatives.

Survivors have a negative attitudinal alignment with the leader, and they passively resist him or her in their behaviors. These individuals disagree with the leader's values and vision but choose to remain silent for reasons such as fear of getting into trouble or disrupting the social order and causing even more damage. Survivors may occasionally criticize and resist the leader, albeit covertly, so long as their actions do not cause themselves or anyone any trouble. Their main goal is to get through the incumbency of the leader with the least possible damage. The survivor role is consistent with the literature on employees' strategic resistance behavior (Collinson, 2018). Survivors might "cover their tracks" (Scott, 1985, p. 278) to avoid the repercussions of resistance, resort to subtle and routine disruptive behaviors that are harder to detect (e.g., foot dragging, disengagement), or just show inertia (Grint, 2005). Moreover, employees continue to strategically determine their behaviors under strict surveillance. If anything, "gaze of authority" increases individuals' awareness of themselves and their behaviors, enabling them to become better in impression management (Collinson, 2018, p. 272).

Examples of survivors are an assistant professor who remains silent out of fear of endangering tenure or a senior administrator or board member who does not openly oppose the president because he or she believes a power struggle with the president would be too damaging to themselves, other members of the community, or the institution itself. They may resist or criticize the president but are more likely to do so covertly or anonymously, for instance venting with similar minded colleagues, online trolling, or covert sabotage and undermining.

Dissenters have a mid to high level negative attitudinal alignment with the leader and they actively resist him or her in their behaviors. These individuals strongly oppose the leader's values and vision and are publicly vocal about their attitudes. They want their opposition to be heard and they actively pursue policy change and reforms through conventional means within the context of the leadership phenomenon.

An example of a dissenter in the context of the university president might be a student who engages in union activities, campaigning against the current university president, attending protests, and collecting signatures for petitions. Similarly, faculty members who are dissenters might actively oppose policies and applications by raising objections and offering proposals in faculty meetings.

Rebels have very high levels of negative attitudinal alignment with the leader. They reject the leader's legitimacy, and proactively resist him or her with their behaviors. However, rebels continue to identify with the group. As Camus (1951) said, a rebel is a person "who says no, but whose refusal does not imply a renunciation." These individuals see a dire need for a dramatic and urgent change and are willing to risk personal costs or harm to themselves in their efforts to achieve that change.

In the context of our university president, rebels may be faculty members who believe that the president is causing irreparable damage to the university and needs to be stopped immediately or a former student who feels he or she has been wrongfully humiliated and expelled from the university by the president. The alarm caused by the president and his or

her policies, decisions, initiatives and vision for the university might lead them to organize protests, create networks of resistance, and in some extreme cases, resort to more violent forms of resistance to change the status-quo.

1.1.11 Audience Role Groups

Role groups emerge when individuals with similar self-perceived attitudinal and behavioral alignments gather. These groups can fulfill important functions such as satisfying belonging and identity needs, facilitating self-justification for role behaviors, and providing the means to organize, thereby enhancing individual agency. However, audience members may not be self-reflective enough about their roles or social organization to be aware of their membership in a particular role group.

Audience role groups need not have a cohesive monolithic worldview, or even amicable alliance between members. A role group may represent a specific attitudinal and behavioral alignment towards the leader, but otherwise be heterogeneous, comprising a range of individuals from different backgrounds and personal values or goals. Intragroup conflict due to different backgrounds may be subsumed by the superordinate stance towards the leader (Sherif, 1958), but some differences in motivational bases may also be irreconcilable. Clashes between group members may be exacerbated by attribution errors because the behaviors of others can be interpreted differently than their intended meaning. For instance, a devoted follower might accuse another devoted follower of being an opportunist or a lackey and not a true believer of the leader, whereas that person's attitudes and behavior may effectively align with the prototypical role of that group. Individuals

might also form cliques within the audience role groups based on their shared understandings, motivations, and/or justifications.

Role groups grow more effective as more members become aware of their membership to the audience role group, and the group becomes more internally organized. Nevertheless, even when there is internal heterogeneity and possibly even conflict, a role group as a whole will exert influence on the leadership process that is consistent with the intentions of the role prototypical behavioral and attitudinal alignment.

1.1.12 Audience Topology

The audience topology is the map of social networks representing individuals and role groups and can be imagined as a geographical terrain with mountains representing role groups and valleys the thinly populated boundaries that distinguish but also link the mountains. Nevertheless, audience topologies are not stationary, and will shift and change over time.

It is important to note that the topology represents population distribution and density but not necessarily power and influence. For instance, it is possible to have an audience topology in which the leader's supporters are a minority. Generally speaking, there are four possible topology forms: (i) leader-favoring majority, (ii) divided, (iii) neutral, and (iv) leader-favoring minority audience (Figure 2.3).

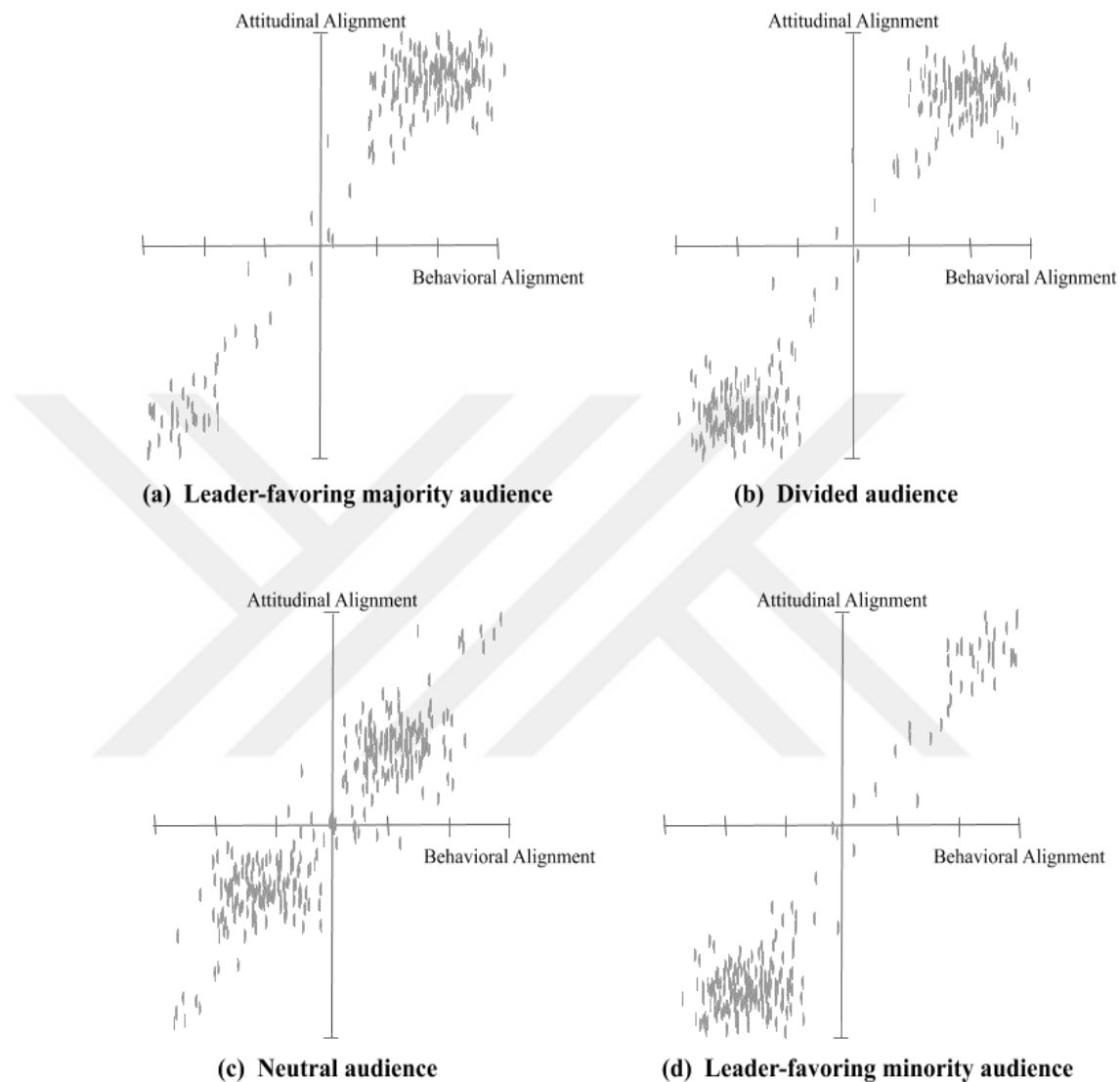


Figure 0.3: Audience topology forms

The leadership literature often considers the *leader-favoring majority* audience to be the ideal, normative form. The popular view admits that although some members are not followers, they may be converted, or their threat and resistance otherwise minimized. In reality, a leader-favoring majority audience is difficult to maintain, in part because its consequences are not always objectively beneficial or desirable to all members. On the dark

side, this form can easily represent a tyranny of the majority (Mill, 1859).

A ***divided*** audience is split into prominent camps, or aggregates of role groups with similar positions towards the leader, as role groups converge at the extremes of attitudinal and behavioral alignment. In cases of extreme polarization audience members may find that either their choice of available roles diminishes to stark contrasts or that the distinctions between certain roles become blurred despite the persistence of divergent attitudes and intentions. This can be a volatile and unmanageable context because, as Abramson says, democracy is impossible “when ‘the’ people do not exist but are divided among warring tribes” (2009: 10). As the rift between such warring tribes become more pronounced, opportunities to reach a consensus or common ground dwindle (Levitsky & Ziblatt, 2018).

Another aspect of a highly divided audience is the lack of transitivity between camps. As the rift between camps enlarges, it becomes more costly for individuals to move between them, effectively inhibiting mobility. Consequently, by limiting the variety of viable audience roles, polarization can create a vicious cycle that entraps and further marginalizes audience members.

In the ***neutral audience*** form, opposing and supporting camps do not diverge significantly in terms of attitudinal and behavioral alignment. Instead, the majority of audience members have a moderate stance towards the leader: followers are not particularly enthusiastic, and non-followers are not terribly upset. Nonetheless, it is important to disentangle the neutrality of the audience from the salience of the leadership phenomenon. The fact that the

majority of the audience does not have a very high or low attitudinal and behavioral alignment with the leader does not mean that audience members don't care about the leadership phenomenon or that leadership is ineffective in achieving valued goals and outcomes. As the role groups' positions are not marginalized, it might be easier for followers and non-followers to find common ground and cooperate on a greater number of issues regarding the leadership phenomenon. Moreover, since there are no significantly opposed camps, individuals may not face the costs that they would face in a polarized audience about changing their roles, thereby expressing dissent or support.

Notably, the leader effectiveness literature tends to promote the assumption that in order to reach goals, the leader must fire up the audience into passionate support, aiming for an audience topology characterized as leader majority support or, alternatively, polarized. However, I suggest that neutral audiences can be desirable because they can be more stable and productive than more enthusiastic audience topologies. A neutral audience that considers leadership goals to be commonly accepted may be more likely to persevere and achieve sustainable results.

A ***leader-favoring minority*** describes the context in which the leader is opposed by the majority of the audience members. The power structure may be such that a small number of supporters may be enough for leader emergence and sustainability. Indeed, a department manager may be exceptionally disliked by their employees but keep their role thanks to the support of the CEO. Typically, this audience form is considered hegemonic or dictatorial.

Applications and Implications

In this chapter, I have discussed the different audience roles that people may assume as a group member, and how those roles cohere into subgroups and the audience itself. My purpose has been to demonstrate that leadership is not the product of one individual but that it emerges from the individual and collective agencies within a group as members interact with, influence, and accommodate each other. In this sense, leadership is a group level phenomenon that is produced from the social network of relationships, attitudes, and behaviors. Research in the participatory theater framework begins with each of these constitutive components and explores their contribution to the leadership phenomenon.

The participatory theater framework diverges from the current leadership paradigms significantly by including non-followers, introducing role typology and audience topology, and conceptualizing leadership in a multi-level agency flow model. The PTF creates three strains of research: (i) clarification and establishment of the framework itself through the operationalization, measurement, and exploration of mechanisms within and between levels; (ii) examination of inputs into the participatory theater framework at each level, including the influence of factors outside the audience such as power structure and institutions; and (iii) demonstration of the influence of the framework in understanding leadership and its outcomes.

1.1.13 Establishing the PTF

I propose several avenues of research on constitutive elements of the participatory theater framework, specifically the audience, role types, role groups, and topology. First, at the

core of the participatory theater framework are the roles that audience members select for themselves. Although I propose an innate audience role typology, there is a need for empirical evidence supporting the existence of these role definitions. Accordingly, a critical step for the PTF is the development of an individual level assessment tool based on the audience dimensions discussed herein. The PTF roles can be assessed through conventional qualitative methods, but they can also be operationalized by assessing individuals' attitudes and behaviors towards a leader. Furthermore, such operationalization can also benefit from recent developments in data science including machine learning algorithms and semantic clustering.

Second, another stream of research can explore how and why audience members engage in the participatory theater process. This aspect of the participatory theater framework resonates strongly with the literature on identity and identity work (Ibarra, 1999; Koerner, 2014). Roles are selected, adopted, and enacted through an individual level decision making process that is both an act of expression and self-construction. Understanding what a chosen role means to an individual will provide insight into how that individual sees the world and his or her place in it. In addition, the relevance of a role can change over time, with supporters of a leader becoming apathetic or even resistant. Notably, the social relevance of a role may change also, making the role more or less conventional, costly, beneficial, or risky.

Third, it is critical to ask who is included in the audience and who is not, as well as where the boundary lies and why. A limitation of the current formal definition of the audience is

that it does not include external stakeholders. Since people assume a social identity as an audience member by self-categorizing, the audience does not need to be completely synonymous with the organization as its social reference group and can include external stakeholders. For instance, people outside the strict boundaries of the organization may still consider themselves to be audience members. An example of a specified research question would be the consequences of limiting membership to the social group of leadership with employment in the organization as a tool by which to exclude relevant parties (e.g., consumers, gig workers, suppliers, NGOs) from the audience, even though those people identify themselves as engaged with and affected by the leadership phenomenon.

Future research can also observe the changes in audience boundaries and study how the audiences expand, contract, or transform across contexts and time. For instance, as a particular leadership phenomenon becomes more consequential, or its outcomes evident, some people who were previously not a part of the audience may become increasingly motivated to claim an identity in the audience. Indeed, a recent example of an expanding leadership audience can be the case of Facebook. As the influence of Facebook became evident, previously uninterested parties such as policy makers and consumers became increasingly motivated to adopt a role in the leadership of Facebook (Osnos, 2018). In that sense, a leadership audience is a dynamic phenomenon that changes through time in terms of both its boundaries (i.e., who is included in the audience) and social network structure of its members (i.e., audience topology).

Fourth, the organization and structure of the audience is influenced by how leader roles are

distinguished and positioned within the group. Leaders can be nested from the C-suite to department managers and team supervisors. Hybrid organizations can present multiple leaders with conflicting authority structures. Some organizations have shared leadership, for instance arts groups that are co-led by Artistic Directors or Curators and Financial Officers. Even beyond the formal organization, there may be expertise leaders or social leaders. In any context, there will be multiple active frameworks with common audience members, producing leadership phenomena that overlap and influence each other. Notably, the distribution and recognition of subgroup leader roles will correspond with topologies that exist simultaneously and in parallel within the complete audience, complicating leadership. The PTF provides an effective method of studying these nested and complex parallel social realities.

1.1.14 Inputs to the PTF

The participatory theater framework defines role adoption, refinement, and abandonment as an individual level decision making process that is social to the extent that it depends on an interpretation of context. Personality, disposition, identity, social position or status, and their attendant cognitive processes, are distinctive antecedents of individuals' role decisions. Research on relevant individual differences will shed light on the decision-making process and, because individual and collective agencies compile, effects that are further downstream.

Further, there are distinctive antecedents of different types of audience topologies. A comprehensive program of research with large scale data collection across cultures,

contexts, and group sizes will provide a better understanding of the universal and specific aspects of audience roles. For instance, do the same roles appear with the same emphases in sports teams, organizations, and politics? To what extent does culture prescribe, proscribe, and provide opportunities to enact some roles or others (e.g., Morris & Gelfand, 2004)?

Similarly, how might audience topologies be influenced by or realized in different professions or industries, such as accounting, service, and so forth. The dominant institutions that characterize culture, industry, and organizations will exert formative influences on all aspects of the framework, from attitudes and behaviors through to topology and the relative influence of subgroup collective agencies.

Power structure has systemic effects on the workings of the multilevel processes of the PTF. For instance, even in the most authoritarian distributions of power individuals would still be adopting and enacting audience roles, but the costs and constraints they consider are significantly different from a similar individual in a more egalitarian context. Similarly, in shared leadership (D’Innocenzo et al., 2016), the distributed nature of the leader role can complicate other role selection and adoption processes. As such, leadership scholars can investigate the specific ways in which power structure or other external factors affect individual role selection and enactment and, therefore, the network of individual and sub-collective agencies.

1.1.15 The PTF Outcomes

As a holistic framework of leadership, the PTF has implications for leadership outcomes on all levels. Applying the participatory theater framework to traditional leadership outcomes

will produce new insights and consequently the development of more effective strategies. First, the PTF accounts for polyphony in the authorship of leadership vision and creates a demand for more critical assessments of what might be a good outcome. Second, it challenges the traditional causal attributions that associate good or bad outcomes with the leader rather than a social process. Third, it articulates a need to recognize that the behaviors of leaders, followers, and non-followers are already customized towards others in the audience topology and, by surfacing this, invites a more reflective approach to leadership.

I suggest a research program to explore these contributions through particular questions. For instance, what attributes of the audience most affect the leadership consequences? Is there a particular constellation of audience attributes that enable good (or destructive) outcomes across a variety of contexts? The existing literature on leadership styles can be integrated into research on the participatory theater framework by asking such questions as how audience topology influences leader emergence; whether the topology of the audience restrains or enables the leader; whether some leadership styles are more effective for certain audience topologies; and how individuals from different audience roles react to various leadership styles.

Conclusion

By introducing the participatory theater framework, I aim to do two things: (i) attract the attention of researchers and practitioners to the wide variety of roles individuals can adopt in a leadership context, as well as the complex, dynamic, and multi-level leadership

processes they co-create, and (ii) provide a framework and accompanying constructs to enable the leadership research to operationalize and use this inclusive understanding of the phenomenon in the future.

I adopt a social constructionist perspective in the participatory theater framework, whereby leadership emerges from the interactions and influences of all actors and subgroups on each other. In this respect, leadership depends on the performances of all individuals and parties and is not merely imposed on members of the group by an elite or a majority, nor is it the interpretation and representation of the leadership phenomenon by a disenfranchised or frustrated subgroup. Consequently, by construing leadership as participatory theater in which the audience is not comprised of mere observers but active and agentic participants of the play, my model allows the members of the group to cooperate or oppose each other while simultaneously capturing their agency and formative influence on each other's performance, on the social group, and on leadership. Implementation of the PTF as an analytical and strategic tool will lead to a clearer understanding of intragroup dynamics and leadership phenomenon, thereby improving group and individual goal fulfillment and well-being.

*Chapter 3***UNDERSTANDING THE FOLLOWERS OF TOXIC LEADERS****TOXIC ILLUSIO AND PERSONAL UNCERTAINTY**

Toxic leaders are fundamentally detrimental to the welfare of humanity (Krasikova et al., 2013). In almost every aspect of our lives, toxic leaders ‘by dint of their destructive behaviors and dysfunctional personal qualities generate a serious and enduring poisonous effect on the individuals, families, organizations, communities, and even entire societies they lead’ (Lipman-Blumen, 2005b). Moreover, this pernicious impact of toxic leaders remains high in both work and social environments thanks to the ardent support of their followers (Lipman-Blumen, 2005a, 2005c; Padilla et al., 2007). As there could be no leaders nor any leadership phenomena without followers (Bastardo & van Vugt, 2019), we need to better understand the followers of toxic leaders in order to combat the negative consequences of toxic leadership (Thoroughgood et al., 2016).

As there is no universally accepted definition of toxic leadership in the literature, I draw from the approach by Lipman-Blumen (e.g., 2005b) and accept the axiom that violating the fundamental human rights of anyone, eroding the rule of law, corruption, discrimination, and destroying the environment are all toxic behaviors that create lasting damage in the societies in which they occur. Consequently, I suggest that a leadership phenomenon is toxic to the degree that it normalizes and sustains such toxic behavior. Unfortunately, there

are a great number of examples of crises, in part due to toxic leadership, such as the recent crisis of moral entrepreneurship at the Cochrane foundation (Greenhalgh et al., 2019), major fraud and toxic envy at Theranos (Hartmans & Leskin, 2020), abuse of employees at Amazon (Kantor & Streitfeld, 2015), mishandling and monetization of private user data by Facebook (Graham-Harrison & Cadwalladr, 2018), and the unapologetic discrimination at Uber (Mancini, 2017). Examples of toxic leadership are ample in the political domain as well, such as in the Lava Jato (Car Wash) corruption scandal of Rouseff (Watts, 2016), the often-stated electoral authoritarianism of Putin (Snyder, 2018) and Viktor Orbán (Lendvai, 2018), and the outright dictatorships of Kim Jong-Un (Frank, 2012). There is also an unfortunate number of toxic leadership phenomena at the societal level, ranging from the Women's National Anti-Suffrage League movement (Bush, 2007) to more marginal and tragic incidents such as mass suicides of Jonestown Massacre (Barker, 1986) and the Heaven's Gate suicides (Balch & Taylor, 2002). Nevertheless, the toxic leadership phenomenon is not limited to extreme and infamous cases, and most people experience the consequences of varying degrees of toxic leadership in their work, family, and society on a daily basis.

There is scant but increasing attention regarding why and how individuals become followers of toxic leaders (e.g., Pelletier et al., 2018). The literature has yet to fully uncover the dynamics of the relationship between toxic leaders and their followers. Furthermore, the literature treats followers mostly as mirrors that reflect the leader on outcomes (May et al., 2014; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). As such, there is a risk of framing followers of toxic leaders as innocent victims or ignorant bystanders who drift with the allure of these leaders. In this

narrative review, I maintain that being a follower is volitional and that followers are the individuals who identify themselves as followers of a specific leader (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). I draw on the Bourdieusian construct of *illusio* together with a narrative review of the social and cognitive psychological approaches. As such, I illustrate the utility of treating followers as agents and co-creators of the toxic phenomenon in terms of understanding why individuals become and remain followers of toxic leaders.

Illusio is ‘the tendency of participants to engage in the game and to believe in its significance, that is, believe that the benefits promised by the field are desirable’ (Heidegren & Lundberg, 2010, p. 12). Therefore, conceptualizing toxic leadership as an *illusio* explains not only why individuals are allured by toxic leaders, but also why they do not seek a way out of the toxic game, even when there are alternative games with better yield. I argue that the toxic *illusio* draws individuals into the game and entices them to stay, because the toxic *illusio* itself performs a critical function and fulfills a strong need for the individual to have certainty in their life.

The literature on the habits and practices of toxic leaders suggests that one of the most common and effective offerings of toxic leaders is the worldview (i.e., the conception of the world) and the self-concept (i.e., ‘an extensive knowledge structure containing many pieces of information relevant to the self’ Lord & Brown, 2004, p. 33) attached to their followership (e.g., Arendt, 1951; Snyder, 2017). I argue that toxic leaders’ proposed worldview and self-concept appeal to individuals with high levels of personal uncertainty. Personal uncertainty (or self-uncertainty) is the uncertainty about the individual’s own self-

concept, values, identity, and overall concept of ‘who one is and how one should behave’ (Rast et al., 2013, p. 637). Such an aversive state might be induced by both unstable external contexts and a lack of resources and capitals to overcome uncertainties, and adopting a strong worldview and self-concept is an effective way to curb personal uncertainty (Hogg & Adelman, 2013; van den Bos, 2009).

Toxic illusio’s pull and promise of a stable self-concept is especially strong, since individuals are particularly motivated to reduce their uncertainty about their selves. Moreover, while individuals join and remain in the toxic illusio for their personal benefit (i.e., for instance accruing different forms of capitals and power in their specific field of relations), their participation collectively shapes and sustains the toxic illusio. The illusio, in return, colors the perceptions, expectations, and future choices of its players and shapes the logic of their field of relations due to the vested interests and illusory promises involved in the vision set forth by a toxic leader.

Drawing on the conceptual universe of Bourdieu, I construe toxic leadership as an illusio (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) and followers as players who join the habitus of the toxic game in order to reduce their personal uncertainty induced by their low endowment of varied forms of capital in their specific field of relations (Bourdieu, 1986). Accordingly, the present chapter contributes to the scholarly discussions on two points. First, the conceptualization of the toxic leadership phenomenon as an illusio allows us to formalize the followers as self-interested players of a toxic game with its own habitus (i.e., intersubjective rules and dynamics). In other words, the construct of illusio (i) emphasizes

the agency of its players, as they have varied forms of capital. Such agency is ‘the capacity and intention to control their own behavior and outcomes by assessing the situation and determining how best to reach their goals while remaining faithful to their beliefs and dispositions’ (Swann & Jetten, 2017, p. 382) and (ii) facilitates further investigation of the internal dynamics of the toxic leadership as a Bourdieusian field by organizing the literature from diverse fields. Second, following the call of van Knippenberg and colleagues, I explore personal uncertainty, induced by followers’ lack of various forms of capital endowments, as a motivation to join the toxic *illusio*, and I discuss the relevant mechanisms that entice and engage individuals.

Although I provide a conceptual model, my manuscript is predominantly a narrative review that explicates the significance of the decision making and cognitive processes of the followers of toxic leaders. Notably, my review focuses on the decision making and cognitive processes of the followers of toxic leaders while excluding the discussions of leader-centric models of toxic leadership.

In this narrative review, I bring together diverse literatures that have not been considered together before, including literature on toxic leaders, Bourdieusian *illusio*, followership, personal uncertainty, and ethical and moral decision making from disciplines of management, organizational and cognitive psychology, and organizational sociology with a view to present an original contribution. I acknowledge that the boundaries of the narrative review are set within my systematic reading of these disparate literatures together in order to address our focal problematic of why people follow toxic leaders. In particular, my

chapter delves into the dark side of leadership, adding another dimension to the debates in the journal on shared leadership (Sweeney et al., 2019) and authentic leadership (Iszatt-White & Kempster, 2019), both of which engage with the high road to leadership. In terms of ontology, the process-relational approach that I take is in line with the framing of relational social constructionist approach to leadership by Endres and Weibler (2017).

The remainder of this chapter is organized as follows. First, I briefly describe my narrative review methodology and process. Second, I discuss the concepts of ethics, morality, and toxicity in the context of leadership and specifically followers. Third, I review the conceptual universe of Bourdieu and introduce toxic *illusio* as its application in a toxic leadership context. Fourth, building on the toxic *illusio* and personal uncertainty constructs and the synthesis of a diverse range of extant theories, I describe why some individuals join the toxic *illusio*, why they remain in the game, and what it takes for them to leave. Finally, I conclude with my suggestions for future research areas in light of the framework I introduced as well as possible limitations for such research.

Method

The starting point for my review was my desire to present a follower-centric approach to Lipman-Blumen's toxic leadership construct. In order to explain why individuals may become and remain followers of toxic leaders, I used Bourdieu's notion of *illusio*, which accounts for the individuals' inability to develop healthy distance to the social games which they join. Adopting a process-relational perspective, I turned to the literature on cognitive and social psychology and ethical decision making in order to explain the behaviors of

followers of toxic leaders.

As such, I started this project with the awareness of a knowledge gap in the toxic leadership literature and a well-defined research question. I had prior information about the key texts and theories of toxic leadership, Bourdieusian *illusio*, cognitive and social psychology, and ethics that may be applicable to my research question. Consequently, I adopted a narrative review approach to organize and synthesize the previous literature (Hammersley, 2001; Hodgkinson & Ford, 2014).

Narrative review is described as a process that “begins with a small number of articles and books, which are then used to identify key authors and other articles that are related to the particular topic” (Jones & Gatrell, 2014, p. 257). As my conceptual model draws from a number of different literatures (i.e., toxic leadership, followership, Bourdieusian *illusio*, social identity and personal uncertainty, moral decision making, individual decision making and biases), I have identified starting points in each of those lines of research. I also combed through classical texts and books as well as recent journal articles in leading journals (e.g., *Academy of Management Review*, *International Journal of Management Reviews*, *Journal of Business Ethics*, *Journal of Management*, and *Leadership Quarterly*), and I have expanded my review through the frequently cited texts found therein.

Furthermore, I ran searches in the Web of Science and Google Scholar for the combinations of relevant terms such as toxic, destructive and pseudo-transformational leaders and leadership, followers, *illusio*, personal uncertainty, and ethical decision making. For each search, I read the abstracts and reviewed the relevant papers in detail. Notably, the narrative

review process is a ‘hermeneutic circle’ (c.f. Alvesson, 2010, p. 196), and it implicates iterative phases of ‘review and (re)constitution’ (c.f. Rhodes & Pullen, 2018, p. 485). In that sense, in addition to searching for additional literature, my narrative review implies re-readings of important texts as I build my conceptual model.

As discussed in greater detail in the next section, there are a number of different definitions of toxic/destructive leadership. My understanding of toxic leadership predominantly overlaps with Lipman-Blumen’s conceptualization, and therefore, I started my review based on her works. I also reviewed every article I could find on toxic leadership (e.g., Heppell, 2011; Pelletier, 2010, 2012) as well as similar constructs such as destructive leadership (e.g., Padilla et al., 2007; Thoroughgood et al., 2016) and pseudo-transformational leadership (e.g., Tourish, 2013). I have also extended my review to the seminal as well as most recent relevant books and articles from other disciplines such as political science (e.g., Arendt, 1951; Snyder, 2017).

Although the literature on followership is now a mature field, with more than 25,000 manuscripts with the word ‘followership’ in the abstract, there are much fewer papers on toxic followers (e.g., “toxic follower” found in 15 manuscripts and “destructive leader follower” in 72). In line with my conceptualization of toxic leadership as an *illusio* and its players as its co-creators, I adopted the constructivist approach to followership and chose the review by Uhl-Bien and colleagues (2014) of the field as my key text. Given the lack of explicit focus on the followers of toxic leaders, hence the gap in the literature, I mostly used the toxic leadership manuscripts to grasp how previous literature frame followers,

specifically in toxic contexts.

Furthermore, since I consider followers of toxic leaders to be agents with social cognitive processes, I turned to the related literature to identify the mechanisms that constitute the allure and sustainability of toxic leadership phenomena. As expected, there were a limited number of papers on follower cognition and decision-making (e.g., “follower cognition” in 85 articles and “follower decision making” in 330). Based on the toolset that toxic leaders use to attract and keep followers and the discussion on material, social, cultural, and symbolic resources (and their deficit) within the Bourdieusian conceptual universe, I focused on personal uncertainty as the main motivator for individuals to join a toxic game. There is strong research on personal uncertainty, with more than 4,000 scholarly texts on the subject (e.g., van den Bos, 2009), and the relationship between personal uncertainty and toxic leadership phenomena is already well-established (e.g., Hogg & Adelman, 2013; Rast et al., 2013).

Thanks to its close ties with individuals’ self-image and social identity, personal uncertainty is not only a coherent mechanism to explain why individuals join the toxic illusio, but it also provides an effective foundation for synthesizing other cognitive and social psychological mechanisms that keep individuals in the game. In that regard, I started my review on ethical decision-making literature with the excellent annual review by Treviño, den Nieuwenboer, and Kish-Gephart (2014) as well as periodic reviews by O’Fallon and Butterfield (between 1996-2003; 2005) and Craft (between 2004-2011; 2013). I also extended my review to sub-fields of ethical decision making and its

nomological network, such as moral disengagement (e.g., Bandura, 1999), moral decoupling (e.g., Bhattacharjee et al., 2013), moral identity (e.g., Shao et al., 2008), moral rationalization (e.g., Tsang, 2002), cognitive dissonance (e.g., Festinger, 1957), biases and heuristics (e.g., Tversky & Kahneman, 1974), and normalization of corruption (e.g., Ashforth & Anand, 2003) in general.

Finally, Bourdieusian *illusio* is the main umbrella construct in my understanding of the processes and mechanisms that allure and retain followers in toxic leadership phenomena. My review revealed limited use of the construct in leadership contexts and no prior framing in terms of toxic followers. I resorted to the primary texts of Bourdieu and his colleagues (e.g., Bourdieu, 1986; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992) as well as applications of *illusio* in other contexts (e.g., Lupu & Empson, 2015; Tatli et al., 2018) for my conceptualization process.

To summarize, my narrative review confirmed that the literature on toxic leadership is often studied from leader-centric approaches, with a few exceptions by authors such as Padilla and colleagues (2007). I develop this literature further by explicating the decision making and cognitive processes behind the how and why individuals become and remain followers of a toxic leader.

Ethics, Morality, and Toxicity

The existence and nature of a universal code of ethics has been debated by a number of great thinkers. Marx (1843), for example, argued against the existence of a universal ethics

code because he believed that ethics is *dialectical*, and therefore historically and economically conditioned. In his view, ethics was shaped and reshaped by a world that is constantly changing and was dependent on who you are in society. Nietzsche also argued against the existence of a universal ethics code, but for reasons that are very different from Marx. In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche (1883) argued that the ideal of a universal ethics is the very burden that individuals need to confront before they can achieve self-realization, or in other words, transform into an *ubermensch*. Indeed, as Nietzsche explains through allegories, an individual can become an *ubermensch* if and only if they can slay the dragon of the existing moral values and create their own ethics from scratch with the unbiasedness of a small child. Kant, on the other hand, not only defended the existence of a universal rule of ethic, but also proposed the *categorical imperative* as a candidate: ‘Act only according to that maxim whereby you can, at the same time, will that it should become a universal law’ (1785, p. 30). In other words, according to Kant, an act is ethical if the individual would prefer a world in which the act is the norm. Alternatively, Rawls (1971) suggested a *veil of ignorance* approach to attain the universal ethic. According to Rawls, an act is ethical if and only if the individual would have approved that action from behind the veil of ignorance, or from the *original position*, at which ‘no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status; nor does he know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence and strength, and the like’ (1971, p. 117). In that sense, Rawls’ argument suggests that an act is ethical to the extent that the individual would agree to it without knowing whether they will be the subject or the perpetrator of the act.

Considering that the greatest minds of human species are yet to agree upon the existence of and/or what constitutes the universal code of ethics, it is a formidable task to define what toxicity means in a way that would satisfy every reader (Petocz & Miner, 2003) within the scope of the present chapter. Indeed, despite its growing popularity among scholars, media, and the general public, what toxic leadership means remains largely contested. In addition to several other conceptualizations of the ‘dark side of leadership’ such as destructive leadership, tyrannical leadership, and pseudo-transformational leadership (Thoroughgood et al., 2016), there are a number of definitions for toxic leadership with different disciplinary backgrounds. For instance, derived from a management perspective, Whicker (1996) and Kellerman (2004) defined toxic leaders through their common traits and behaviors, whereas Goldman (2006) used clinically diagnosable mental health disorders to describe toxic leaders.

In line with Lipman-Blumen’s toxic leadership framework (2005a, 2005b, 2005c), I define toxic leaders as leaders who create serious and enduring harm by engaging in ‘destructive behaviors’ and exhibiting ‘dysfunctional characteristics’. In that sense, toxic leaders mislead their followers through lies and illusions, play to their ‘basest fears and needs’; promote ‘incompetence, cronyism, corruption’ (Heppell, 2011, p. 244); and ‘undermine, demean, marginalize, intimidate, demoralize, and disenfranchise’ non-followers, and in extreme cases ‘incapacitate, imprison, terrorize, torture, or kill’ them (Pelletier, 2010, p. 376). Accordingly, I take the view that a leadership is toxic even if it provides partial benefit to some (especially followers), and yet cause more harm on balance through normalization of toxic behaviors such as deinstitutionalization, decreased transparency and

responsibility, lack of accountability, corruption and self-interested allocation of resources, as well as violation of fundamental human and animal rights and environmental harm. I acknowledge that there are degrees within the toxicity of a leadership phenomenon, as minor corruption cannot be equated with torture or murder, but within the scope of this chapter, I focus my attention on the generalizable mechanisms and processes regardless of the degree of toxicity.

Notably, the fact that I as non-players consider a particular leadership phenomenon as unethical does not mean that followers of toxic leaders have a negative perception of their own morality. Indeed, although it is common practice to use ethics and morality interchangeably in the social sciences literature (Treviño & Nelson, 2013), the philosophy literature makes a distinction between the two. Particularly, in his *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel (1820) argues that whereas morality is subjective for each person, ethics comes from ‘values, institutions, and norms’ that are ‘universally or objectively good’ (Abramson, 2009, p. 306). Therefore, as long as individuals take their conscience as the measure of right conduct, they can have a moral life but not necessarily an ethical one. Similarly, players of toxic illusio may believe that their actions are moral as long as they derive their self-concept and worldview from the game. As their personal ethical standards are strongly aligned with the toxic illusio, complying with the toxic game is moral by definition. Consequently, not only might the players not experience any moral dissonance themselves, but they might also perceive the toxic leader – the prototype of the illusio’s social identity – as the pivot of morality. Indeed, the previous literature suggests that an individual’s attitude towards the leader significantly affects that person’s evaluations of the leader (Hansbrough

et al., 2015) and that the subjective evaluations of a particular leader's toxicity are inherently shaped by whether the individual identifies as a follower or not (Pelletier, 2012). That is why, as Lipman-Blumen (2005a, 2005b, 2005c) so accurately identified, even the toxic leaders that have been condemned globally as evil are rallied and cherished as righteous heroes by their followers. In that sense, it is important to emphasize that, even if the rest of the world (along with the scientific community) has reached a consensus on the toxicity of a leader, the toxic illusio may still shield the leader from his/her followers' scrutiny.

Furthermore, followers of toxic leaders decide to join and remain in such toxic illusio with agency. Because these players are agents, they are also responsible for the outcomes of the social phenomenon they co-create. In that regard, I strongly believe that this responsibility of members of the toxic illusio demands further investigation into their roles in co-creating and perpetuating the phenomenon, and the reasons why they join and remain in these toxic games. Consequently, the present chapter's aim is to take a first step in organizing the previous knowledge about toxic leaders' and their followers' motivations and behaviors and to present it in a framework that might enable future research to a better understanding of the toxic leadership phenomenon.

Bourdieu's Conceptual Universe and The Allure of Toxic Leaders

Bourdieu's conceptual universe has been increasingly employed in order to explore leadership phenomena (Eacott, 2016; Thomson, 2017). The concept of the field refers to the dynamic web of relations of power in a particular context (Bourdieu, 1986). Leadership

is such a field in which the leader and the followers have a web of relations in which they deploy varied forms of capitals and power in order to secure and advance their interests. Habitus is the taken-for-granted meanings which have become customary to an individual or a collective as a result of being repeated and legitimated in a given field of relations (Özbilgin & Tatli, 2011). Individuals within the same field and who share a collective habitus may still display variations in terms of their behavioral choices. Bourdieu accounts for this diversity with variety in the capital endowments, dispositions, and strategies of individuals. Bourdieu defines four types of capital (Tatli et al., 2018). Economic capital refers to the financial and nonfinancial assets that have economic value. Social capital is the endowment of social connections that an individual has. Cultural capital refers to capacity acquired through education and experience in life. Finally, symbolic capital refers to the status, recognition, and respect one acquires in a given context. Individuals strive to accumulate different forms of capital, and they convert different capitals to one another in their pursuit of their life goals. For example, they may use their social capital in order to enhance economic prospects and acquire educational qualifications to improve their symbolic capital.

Lack of one or more forms of capital may induce in individuals some level of personal uncertainty. Individuals may try to address their personal uncertainty by acquiring and strategically deploying varied forms of capitals to enhance their positionality in the field through their life course. Through the concepts of the field, the habitus and capitals, it is possible to understand why individuals follow leaders whose visions help them enhance their stakes in life. However, in this chapter, I turn to one of the least-used concepts of

Bourdieu, the *illusio*, to explore why individuals join and remain followers of toxic leaders. *Illusio* helps us understand why people join social, economic, and cultural games, and by doing so, how they are absorbed by the game. Bourdieu defines *illusio* as the belief that the game that an individual plays is worth playing (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992). Once taken in by the *illusio*, players of the game do not search for a way out of the game, even when there are alternative games with better yield that they could play. An example of an *illusio* can be the belief in the significance of overtime work for high performance in a workplace, in which the rules of the game require overtime work when there is no causal relationship between overtime work and high performance (Lupu & Empson, 2015). Overtime work remains an *illusio* norm that people do not challenge, even when it no longer leads to productivity or effectiveness at work, and on the contrary, could prove detrimental for some individuals.

For Bourdieu, the *illusio* evades criticism by the players who are absorbed in the game and its peculiar rules in a given field of relations. In that regard, what Lipman-Blumen (2005c) calls the allure of toxic leadership is akin to the appeal of *illusio* for the players of any particular game. Followers are drawn to toxic leadership, which provides them with an alluring and strong alternative worldview and a stable self-concept that incites them to play. Moreover, as players of the toxic game, followers expect to receive the benefits associated with the game as long as they remain as one. Additionally, the benefits of the game do not have to be limited to psychological domain. Individuals may reduce their personal uncertainty by acquiring both a worldview and access to social, cultural, economic, and symbolic resources afforded by the field of relations in the toxic *illusio*, which may serve

them well. Even if an individual is drawn into the toxic illusio solely to avoid the aversive feelings related to the personal uncertainty, they can still become constrained by the social and material ties they form as the game goes on. In fact, as I discuss later in greater detail, these ties, threats, and promises may both serve the interests of and restrain an individual from quitting the game, even when they become disillusioned about the worldview and the self-concept that were offered by the toxic leader.

As the illusio is co-constructed by all parties that join the game and the context in which the game takes place, the leader and the followers mutually sustain the toxic illusio and give it internal legitimacy. Consequently, my approach emphasizes how followers are not passive, innocent bystanders but willful, self-interested agents who sustain and support the toxic illusio together with the leader and other followers. Indeed, I support the approach that followers are responsible for the consequences of the toxic illusio. Nevertheless, there is the threat of neglecting the agency of the individual follower through narratives that corrode the will and the responsibility of the followers of toxic leaders. In a vicious cycle, the denudation of the followers' agency under toxic leaders in theory provides more legitimization for leaders to erode followers' agency and individualism in practice (Tourish, 2013). That's why I believe that it is crucial to understand the choices, chances, motives, and reasoning of the followers of toxic leaders in order to avoid future reproductions of the toxic illusio.

Joining the Toxic Game

Each illusio has its own unique allure that attracts prospective players and keeps the current

players in. The composition of this unique allure may vary from mostly psychological benefits to more material gains, i.e., different forms of capitals, depending on the field, the leader, and their followers. In fact, previous literature suggested a variety of categorizations based on followers' motivations, such as colluders and conformers of the toxic triangle (Padilla et al., 2007), lost souls, bystanders, opportunists, acolytes, and authoritarians of the susceptible circle (Thoroughgood et al., 2012), Lipman-Blumen's anxious benign followers, pragmatic benign followers, the leader's entourage, and malevolent followers (2005b). Nevertheless, as Lipman-Blumen herself discusses in her book, 'The Allure of Toxic Leaders' (2005b), the primary allure of the toxic illusio is 'the meaning of life' (p. 52) as well as the feelings of 'belonging, safety, and direction' (p.35) associated with it. In that regard, the present chapter focuses on personal uncertainty as the motivating factor behind an individual's decision to join the toxic game by increasing their need for these offerings of the toxic illusio.

Previous studies demonstrate higher support for autocratic and populist leaders who provide a strong identity among individuals who experience high levels of personal uncertainty (Schoel et al., 2011). I argue that individuals with high levels of personal uncertainty are pulled in by the promise of avoiding this aversive state through internalizing the strong worldview and self-concept, which are presented by the toxic illusio (Figure 3.1). Admittedly, providing a worldview and self-concept to their followers is not exclusive to toxic leaders. Transformational leaders (Bass & Avolio, 1994), for example, are distinguished by their idealized influence and inspirational motivation. In that sense, it is important to note that the present chapter constrains its focus to toxic leadership

phenomena.

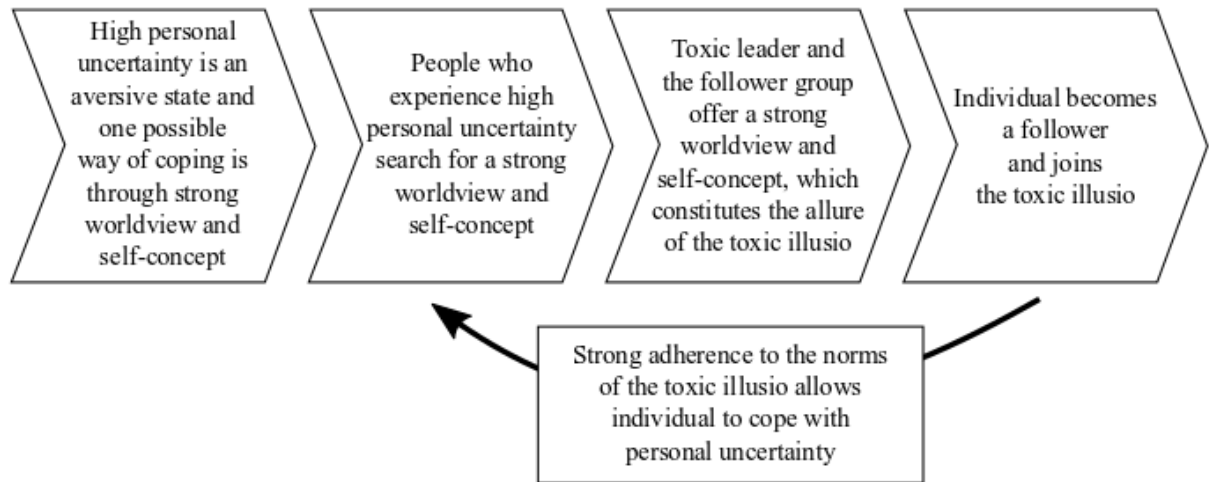


Figure 0.1: Interplay between the toxic illusion and personal uncertainty

Source: Adapted from van den Bos, 2009: 23

Personal uncertainty is defined as a ‘subjective sense of doubt or instability in self-views, worldviews, or the interrelation between the two’ (van den Bos, 2009, p. 198). A similar construct, self-uncertainty, is defined as ‘feelings of uncertainty, particularly about or relating to who one is and how one should behave’ (Hogg, 2015, p. 308). Concordantly, self-uncertainty is an aversive temporal state, and individuals are motivated to reduce it (Guillén Ramo et al., 2018). Causes of personal uncertainty can be framed by using Bourdieu’s notions of capitals and identify this lack of social, cultural, economic, and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1986). As such, a lack of resources renders individuals susceptible to experience higher levels of personal uncertainty that exists in their unique field of relations. In that sense, personal uncertainty (or self-uncertainty) is closely related

to the previous conceptualizations of followers of toxic leaders. For instance, the previous literature argues that followers of toxic leaders have low maturity (Padilla et al., 2007). Since maturity is defined as obtaining an integrated and socially valued identity (Erikson, 1959), followers' immaturity implies the absence of a stable self-concept. Similarly, previous literature suggests that followers of toxic leaders 'question their place in the world' (Thoroughgood et al., 2012, p. 904) and do not have strong value systems that shape their identity. Indeed, values and value systems are a critical component of a person's worldview and self-concept. According to Rokeach,

“values are simultaneously components of psychological processes, of social interaction, and of cultural patterning and storage. [...] A value system is an organized set of preferential standards that are used in making selections of objects and actions, resolving conflicts, invoking social sanctions, [...]. Values are components in the guidance of anticipatory and goal-directed behavior, but they are also backward-looking in their frequent service to justify or “explain” past conduct.”
(1979, p. 20)

As individuals' personal uncertainty increases, their value systems become increasingly ambiguous, and they find it harder to interpret the world and their position in it. Consequently, when personal uncertainty reaches a point at which the 'previous values no longer provide a valid interpretive framework, the individual will yearn for new values that create order and provide direction as they attempt to make sense of their world' (Gebert et al., 2016, p. 99). High levels of personal uncertainty, therefore, suggest low levels of symbolic capital and individual worth in a particular field of values and relationships.

Toxic illusio answers these individuals' need for 'safety, security, group membership, and predictability in an uncertain world' (Padilla et al., 2007, p. 183) by providing a vision, clear boundaries, rituals, social structure, and a value system that promises order and a better future for those who participate.

There is an abundance of evidence in the literature regarding leaders' communication of values, mission and vision, ideologies, and goals and how they are incorporated into the followers' self-concepts (e.g., Gebert et al., 2016). Although some leaders may provide these tools to their followers unconsciously, others deliberately manage these processes. As Hitler allegedly put it, 'A mass rally is designed to switch off the thinking process. Only then would the people be ready to accept the magical simplifications before which all resistance crumbles' (Fest & Herrendoerfer, 1977). Since one of the key resources in uncertainty reduction is the cognitive capacity (Hogg & Adelman, 2013), toxic leaders design their communications to address the complex problems of (prospective) followers with simple solutions with catchy phrases. In that sense, toxic leaders and the illusio promise security and stability through structure, rituals, and rules that make life easier for followers in a complex world. In that sense, the habitus of the toxic illusio offers followers symbolic value that enhances their stakes in life. By reducing the uncertainty that followers feel, the toxic illusio enables them to abdicate their moral responsibility to tackle difficult questions. Simplicity of the solution shields and legitimates the toxic element in leadership behavior.

Although the degree to which the individual follower transforms these values into action

differs for each follower, 'the Manson Family, the Hitler Youth, Castro's Pioneros, and Mao's Red Guards all illustrate the destructive potential of impressionable followers who internalize a destructive leader's message' (Thoroughgood et al., 2012, p. 904). In any case, the allure of the toxic illusio touches upon a personal spot when the individual adopts its worldview and self-concept in order to reduce their personal uncertainty. As an aversive state that reflects directly on an individual's self and identity, personal uncertainty creates the immediate need to clarify who one is. That's why, in the hasty search for answers, the feeling of belonging and the identity that the toxic illusio provides becomes fundamental to the very core of the individual. The glorified and simplified alternatives offered by the toxic leader and illusio might prove to be a lifesaver for an individual who is in search of meaning and symbolic worth in such a revised world view.

Although high personal uncertainty renders individuals more vulnerable to the allure of toxic leaders, not every individual with high personal uncertainty becomes a follower of a particular toxic leader, especially in the absence of a compatible toxic illusio. Albeit strained, an individual's existing perception of self may render joining a toxic illusio infeasible if their current self-construct clashes with the toxic leader's proposed worldview and self-concept. For example, a person who supports human rights may not be allured toward a toxic illusio which they believe to endanger some employees' health and safety significantly at the workplace, even when they are having personal uncertainty crises about their professional self.

A conducive field of relations (the environment) also influences the individual's motivation

to join the toxic illusio. The field, in that regard, includes not only the institutional context, such as cultural values and checks and balances mechanisms, but also the situational factors, such as instability and perceived threat. In particular, crises in fast-changing fields such as financial, social, cultural, or security that render the environment uncertain for individuals may exacerbate feelings of personal uncertainty (Rast et al., 2013). As such, crisis situations that further limit an individual's access to capitals and power could provide fertile ground in which to cultivate toxic illusio by motivating individuals to reduce their increased personal uncertainty, which in turn translates to support for a toxic leader. It is also important to emphasize that the construct of personal uncertainty, self-concept, and worldview as employed here are domain specific. In other words, an individual may be a player of a toxic illusio in the political domain but can concurrently have a strong value system and identity in work or family domains, and vice versa.

To summarize, I suggest that an individual becomes susceptible to toxic illusio due to their increased personal uncertainty in a given domain, subject to the availability of a toxic leader and a conducive environment. Moreover, I argue that the individual's adoption of the toxic leader's proposed value system is an agentic choice to reduce their personal uncertainty. In other words, individuals with high levels of personal uncertainty may find joining the toxic game and adopting the self-concept and the worldview associated with it more rewarding than the alternatives, including the status-quo. Once they join the game, however, reciprocal social identity processes initiate, and material and social ties of interest become entrenched in their toxic field. As players alter the game, they play with their decisions and actions, and players are also shaped by the toxic leader and the illusio.

Playing the Toxic Game

Toxic illusio consists of a group of players in which the leader and their followers identify with the group through self-categorization. Accordingly, once the illusio takes shape, the socio-cognitive group processes influence the social identity formulations of its members (van Knippenberg & Hogg, 2018). According to Tajfel, social identity is the self-awareness as a member of a social group, and it implies group membership as having ‘some emotional and value significance’ for the member (1972, p. 292). Social identities enable individuals to identify themselves as part of a certain group, to assimilate the cognitive and behavioral norms of the group, and to discriminate against others who lack membership to this group. Even though all players are co-creators of leadership (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014), leaders are in a more enabling position to orient social identities (van Knippenberg et al., 2004). Indeed, Hogg argues that these social identities and the associated socio-cognitive processes enable leaders to ‘emerge, maintain their position, be effective’ (2001, p. 186) due to the leader's prototypical, or influential, status. Within these cognitive processes, leaders are the entrepreneurs of identity whose vision and values spread to the members of the group (Reicher et al., 2005), thus making the toxic illusio viable.

Beyond the social identity ties, toxic illusio offers other material, social, cultural, and symbolic resources as well. Toxic leaders use coercive persuasion techniques to further consolidate and homogenize their follower group and to ensure that the players stay committed to the game. Coercive persuasion methods are the ‘discursive systems of constraint that are difficult for followers to challenge and resist’ (Tourish, 2013, p. 40). Such methods include but are not limited to reference group affiliation, role modeling, peer

pressures, alignment of identity, performance assessment, and reward systems (for a detailed discussion of various techniques, please see Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004). An example of such practices is the significant use of ‘friend or foe’ rhetoric (Pelletier, 2010). When used effectively, this rhetoric not only introduces an existential threat by an ‘other’ to immediate the necessity of group social identity, but also consolidates the appropriate attitude and behavior expectations of the toxic illuso by drawing a clear distinction between the in-group and out-group. The perceived existential threat also legitimizes the toxic leader and the group’s emphasis on loyalty to the group identity, which in turn normalizes the associated reward and punishment systems. As such, coercive persuasion practices demonstrated by toxic leaders achieve their objective on two fronts. First, these discursive systems accelerate the immersion of the player into the toxic game by presenting them with an immediate decision of whether to fully commit to the totality of the rules of the game or to be banished from the game as one of the ‘others. Second, once the player conforms to the game in its entirety, these same discourses provide the clear boundaries and rules that construct the strong self-concept and worldview that they need to avoid previous high levels of personal uncertainty.

Nevertheless, although toxic leaders are often considered the focal point of the phenomenon, they do not sustain the game alone. Individuals who choose to join the toxic game as a way of reducing their personal uncertainty are also motivated to remain in the game to avoid going back to that initial aversive state. To that end, as Arendt observed in *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (1963), individuals can disengage themselves from the moral aspects of their actions and hence commit evil acts without

necessarily being evil. Moral disengagement, accordingly, can allow the individual to disable the self-regulatory mechanisms that prevent immoral acts through the anticipated self-sanctioning (Bandura, 2002). Indeed, previous research demonstrates that individuals' propensity to morally disengage predicts unethical behavior (Moore et al., 2012). In that sense, absorbed by the toxic *illusio*, followers of toxic leaders can continue to have positive moral perceptions about themselves and other players, whilst contributing to the toxic outcomes of the phenomenon individually and collectively by ignoring the moral consequences of their actions.

Furthermore, as toxic processes normalize within the game through their institutionalization, rationalization, and socialization, players may find it even easier to continue business as usual without any experience of moral conflict (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). Normalization of toxic *habitus* numbs the moral aspect of actions, especially when the individual believes such practices are the norm among, and perceived favorably by, the rest of the players.

Institutionalized organizational behaviors (collective *habitus* at work) are defined as 'stable, repetitive and enduring activities that are enacted by multiple organization members without significant thought about the propriety, utility, or nature of the behavior' (Ashforth & Anand, 2003, p. 4). These behaviors enable players to switch off the trigger for the recognition of the moral aspect of a decision. The rationalization of toxic practices and the game's idiosyncratic rules and norms allows players to justify the toxic practices as normal, which therefore does not require additional thought. As the toxic practices are institutionalized and rationalized, they are also taught to the newcomers as the way things work in the group. This socialization of toxicity might, in fact, turn into a new observable *verge* between the players of the toxic

illusio and ‘others’ by becoming a part of the group’s social identity. In that regard, since players depend strongly on the group social identity, normalization of toxic practices can serve as a catalyst for individuals’ moral disengagement from the ethical consequences of individual and collective actions the toxic game requires.

To summarize, once the individual joins the toxic game to reduce their high levels of personal uncertainty, there are a number of dynamics that enable the players to continue playing the game (and even increase their commitment) and hence prolong the lives of the toxic illusio. First of all, once the individual joins the toxic game, group social identity processes further reinforce the essentiality of the illusio to the construction of their selves. As the individual adopts the self-concept and the worldview proposed by the toxic illusio, they start perceiving themselves as one with the game and the other players as a group. Therefore, since these players depend strongly on the social identity and related norms of toxic illusio to avoid high personal uncertainty, it is less likely that they question the ethical aspect of the game. Secondly, toxic leaders employ coercive persuasion techniques to create discursive systems that make it harder for the players to challenge the rules and norms of the game. In addition to establishing clear boundaries between the in-group members and others, these techniques also structure a range of psychological, social, cultural, symbolic, and material motivations (rewards and punishments) within the rules and dynamics of the toxic game. Thirdly, since the players themselves are motivated to continue playing the game, they ‘deceive themselves about the ethical nature of the issues they face through psychological processes that hide the ethical issues from view’ (Treviño et al., 2006, p. 958). Consequently, by ignoring the ethical aspect of their decisions and actions, members of the toxic illusio can

maintain a positive perception about their individual and collective actions while contributing to the toxic outcomes of the phenomenon. Finally, normalization of toxic practices within the toxic game further reduces the possibility of players recognizing the moral aspect of any decision or act involved. Indeed, as the initial examples of toxic practices are observed to produce positive results in terms of player's motivations, more players adopt these practices, and hence the toxicity becomes embedded in the game and its rules and processes (Ashforth & Anand, 2003). Once routineized, the actions that are supposed to trigger reflective thoughts on ethics are considered less as discrete decision points, but more as a part of the normal proceedings that do not require any additional thought.

In that regard, as the game continues, these four main dynamics collectively prolong the life of the toxic illusio by making players increasingly resistant to questioning the ethics of the game and its outcomes. In fact, this refusal to question the morality of the rules and the dynamics of the toxic illusio can be mistaken as a lack of agency by observers. The present chapter argues against it. I suggest that, once they join the toxic game, players become absorbed in the illusio because they are increasingly motivated to do so. Indeed, once they are settled into their group social identity and rituals, followers are often comfortable in their conformity to the toxic illusio until something disillusion them.

1.1.16 To Remain or Not to Remain a Player, That's the Question

Toxic leaderships 'achieve surprising longevity' (Lipman-Blumen, 2005b, p. 11), and one of the main reasons behind their perennity is the sustained support of their followers. It is often puzzling – if not frustrating – for researchers and the general public alike to observe

followers of toxic leaders in support of such evil people. But as I have discussed in length within this chapter, individuals who join the toxic illusio in order to reduce their high levels of personal uncertainty internalize the self-concept and worldview of the toxic illusio and hence draw their social identity directly from the toxic game and the toxic leader.

Moreover, players of the toxic game further commit to the social identity of the toxic illusio by their accumulated choices and behaviors. In other words, in line with the literature on escalation of commitment (Staw, 1981) and Becker's side-bet theory (1960), the choices and behaviors of the players of the toxic game create a track record for each individual, which makes it increasingly costlier for them to dissent and defect from the group practices (Meyer & Allen, 1984). Therefore, as players of the toxic game, these followers are increasingly motivated to maintain their positive moral perception of themselves, the game, and consequently the leader.

Keeping in mind that followers' support is a significant factor in the durability of toxic leadership phenomena, understanding the dynamics behind their tenacity to remain in the toxic illusio is a crucial first step to reduce the toxic effects of the phenomenon. I suggest that when players of the toxic illusio encounter what an outsider would label as a manifestation of the toxicity of the game, they first employ cognitive defense mechanisms to avoid awareness of the moral aspect of the issue (Figure 3.2 outlines the process of moral decision making for remaining in or leaving the toxic illusio). Motivated to remain within the game and to avoid moral dissonance, players often take refuge in the normalization of the toxicity of the illusio. Considered to be part of routineized processes instead of particular decision points that require additional ethical pondering, most of the day-to-day

instances of toxicity evade any ethical scrutiny by the members of the toxic illusio. In fact, as more toxic practices normalize within the game over time, players may find it easier to ignore even the existence of an ethical question in increasingly toxic routines. As such, providing a post-hoc justification for their judgment only when specifically prompted, players of the toxic game can go through most toxic behaviors without any hint of moral dissonance.

Once players become aware that they are facing a moral issue, they can still decide to act on their intuition by employing mechanisms of moral disengagement, even when their ethical cognitive framework conflicts with the intuition (Moore et al., 2012). To avoid moral dissonance caused by such conflict, moral disengagement mechanisms offer a wide range of tools to avoid self-sanctions by ‘reconstructing conduct as serving moral purposes, obscuring personal agency in detrimental activities, disregarding or misrepresenting the injurious consequences of one’s actions, and blaming and dehumanizing the victims’ (Bandura, 1990, p. 28). More specifically, moral disengagement mechanisms have three main categories: (i) performing cognitive reconstruction of the behavior, i.e. moral justification, euphemistic labeling, and advantageous comparison; (ii) minimizing one’s role in the harmful behavior, i.e. displacement of responsibility, diffusion of responsibility, and disregarding or distorting of the consequences; and (iii) focusing on the targets’ unfavorable acts, i.e. dehumanization and attribution of blame (Treviño et al., 2006).

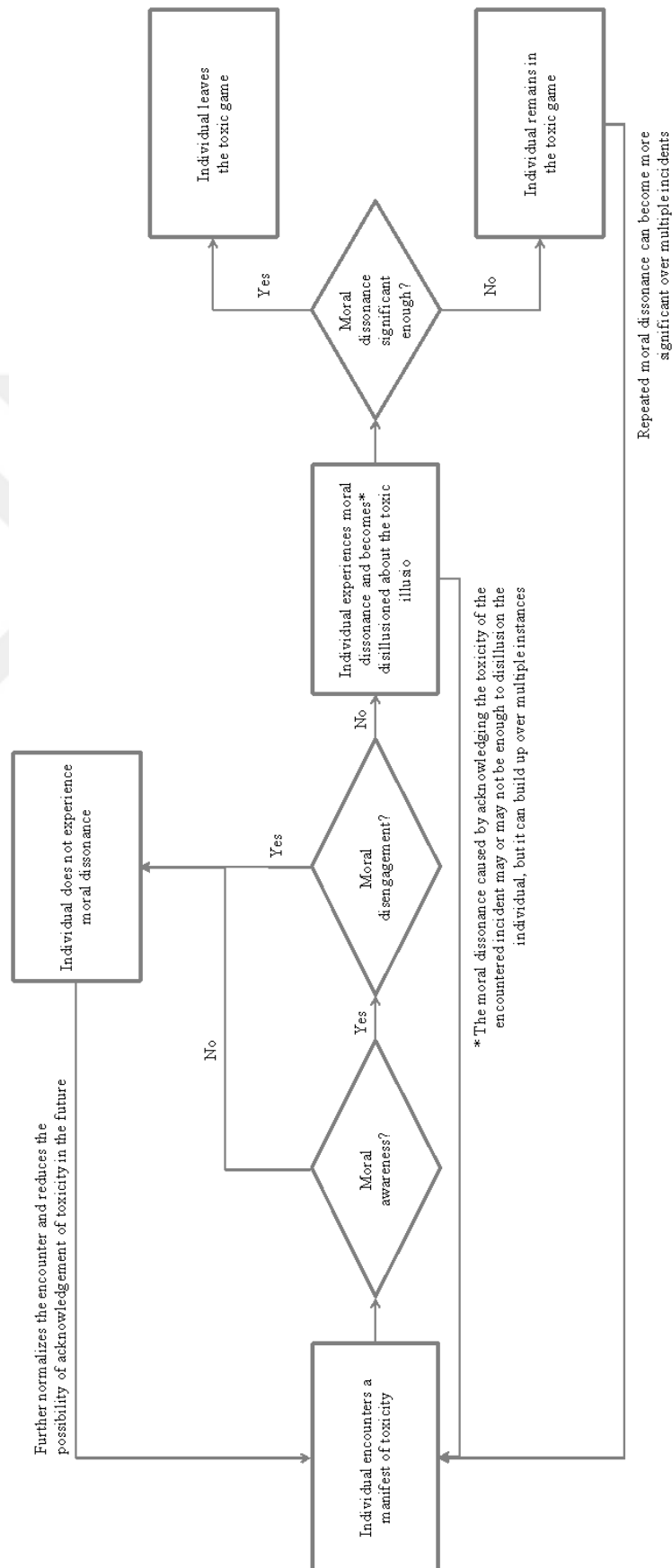


Figure 0.2: Morality-based process model of followers' continued participation in the toxic game

Indeed, the wide range of such cognitive mechanisms that enable individuals to avoid self-sanctioning has been studied extensively in the literature (e.g., moral exclusion and inclusion (e.g., moral decoupling Bhattacharjee et al., 2013; and moral exclusion and inclusion Opatow, 1990). Research demonstrated that ‘people can and do engage in processes of moral rationalization and moral decoupling if they are motivated to continue transacting with or supporting entities that have engaged in harmful or immoral behavior’ (Pfeffer, 2016, p. 664). As such, players of the toxic illusio are strongly motivated to morally disengage from the toxicity they observe to maintain the status-quo they enjoy.

While the players employ the above-mentioned cognitive mechanisms to remain in the game without experiencing any moral dissonance, they receive help from both the toxic leader and other members of the toxic illusio. Toxic leaders, as the prototype of the social identity of toxic illusio, provide arguments and discourses to catalyze members’ moral disengagement in the case of a moral conflict. Amplified by the collective of the members of the toxic illusio, these arguments and discourses are legitimized by the fellow players and provide convenient tools for moral justification. For example, toxic leaders may resort to self-preservation tactics such as cognitive change and alternative truths (Schütz, 1998) to sustain the support of the members of the toxic illusio.

Cognitive change ‘involves selecting which of the many possible meanings will be attached to the situation, reappraising or reinterpreting the situation as having less potential harm to goals, concerns, and well-being.’ (Little et al., 2016, p. 87). In that sense, toxic leaders might use cognitive change tactics to reframe the causes of toxic incidents as well as to

alter how players of the toxic illushio feel about it. An example of such cognitive change can be creating an advantageous comparison. Since ‘whenever events occur or are presented contiguously, the first one colors how the second one is perceived and judged’ (Bandura, 1990, p. 166), toxic leaders can manipulate the cognitive frame of the incident in question by structuring what it is compared against. Instead of changing the cognitive framework of their followers regarding the observed incident of toxicity, toxic leaders can also deliberately lie or distort facts (Pelletier, 2010) to eliminate their followers’ moral dissonance to facilitate their sustained support. Since ‘individuals’ understandings of the world are held as true to the extent that they can be affirmed by some social group’ (Kruglanski & Orehek, 2012, p. 4), lies spread by the toxic leader circulate between the players of the toxic game and become alternative truths.

Furthermore, previous research provides evidence for individuals’ preference for information that supports their social stereotypes (Johnston, 1996), attitudes (Lundgren & Prislin, 1998), and self-serving conclusions (Holton & Pyszczynski, 1989). This cognitive tendency, referred to as confirmation bias, allows the individual to maintain their original position, ‘even if this position is not justified on the basis of all available information’ (Jonas et al., 2001, p. 557). Individuals who joined the toxic illushio are strongly motivated to justify the toxicity of the eliciting situation that they observed. Such players are likely to prefer the arguments and discourses put forth by the toxic leader, exacerbated by the members of the toxic illushio, to information suggesting the toxicity of the game. In fact, recent research suggests that widespread use of Internet and social media further aggravates such confirmation bias by fostering ‘the aggregation of like-minded people where debates

tend to enforce group polarization' (del Vicario et al., 2017, p. 1).

To summarize, individuals who join the toxic illusio as a way of reducing their high levels of personal uncertainty have a predisposition to morally disengage from any manifestation of the toxicity of the game, as they are also often provided with enabling arguments and discourses by the toxic leader and other players collectively. Consequently, more often than not, such players can justify a manifestation of toxicity, even when it initially conflicts with their ethical code, and therefore, they may not experience any moral dissonance.

Nevertheless, even for the players who are most engaged with the toxic game, some instances may be so morally intense that the individual's moral disengagement mechanisms can fail to fend off the moral dissonance that is caused by the clash of the observed incident and personal code of ethics. Moral dissonance, in this sense, "occurs when a person's behavior or general cognitions are in conflict with his/her moral values" (Lowell, 2012, p. 19). More specifically, moral dissonance is a dimension of cognitive dissonance which is defined as "a state of tension whenever an individual holds two cognitions (ideas, attitudes, beliefs, opinions) that are psychologically inconsistent" (Aronson, 1972, p. 178). Therefore, as with the case of cognitive dissonance, moral dissonance is felt more acutely when the individual (i) perceives the instance as an irrevocable commitment on their behalf, (ii) can foresee or observe the consequences clearly, (iii) perceive themselves as responsible for the consequences, and (iv) must devote more effort to create the instance in question (Lowell, 2012). In that regard, as the intensity of moral dissonance experienced due to the perceived toxicity of the game increases, players increasingly feel estranged from the social identity

of the toxic illusio. Such detachment from values and rules of the game may eventually lead to the individual's disillusionment from the toxic illusio. Since moral dissonance accumulates across multiple instances of perceived toxicity, individual's disillusionment from the allure of toxic leadership can result from a single, as well as repeated, demonstrations of the toxicity of the game.

Unfortunately, disillusionment of a player does not necessarily mean that they will leave the toxic game. Although the individuals I described in this chapter joined the toxic illusio overwhelmingly out of cognitive and psychological needs, as I have discussed in the '*Playing the Toxic Game*' section, they become increasingly embedded in the rules and the dynamics of the toxic game while they remain in the illusio. In other words, throughout the period players participate in the toxic game, they strive toward and/or obtain a status within the toxic illusio. Status, defined as "the position in a social hierarchy that results from accumulated acts of deference" (Sauder et al., 2012), in return, determines the material and social benefits the individual derives from participation. Moreover, since the toxic illusio perpetuates its existence through sustained support of its players, dynamic systems of rewards and punishment are set in place to encourage compliance and inhibit dissent from its members. In that sense, as long as the individual is committed to the toxic game, they invest time, effort, and resources to achieve a higher status among other players as well as to obtain the rewards set forth by the game. In addition to material- or power-related benefits of such status and rewards, individuals can also enjoy the social bonds that are formed based on their social status within the toxic illusio. Consequently, even when individuals join the toxic game only to reduce their personal uncertainty, their decision of

whether to leave the game or not includes factors beyond their disillusionment.

More specifically, while a player who experiences moral dissonance due to the perceived toxicity of the game would benefit from leaving the game, it would also cost them their social status within the group and social and material perks from the game. Furthermore, due to the polarizing nature of toxic leaderships, leaving the game may also result in additional sanctions and hostility from toxic illusio members. In that regard, although the extent depends on the time, effort, and resources the individual spent in the game, players may be motivated to remain in the toxic game, even when they are disillusioned about the social identity it provides.

Based on my discussion above, I conclude that, once the individual joins the toxic illusio, they become increasingly motivated to remain in the game. Indeed, when confronted with a manifestation of the toxicity of the game, players are likely to (i) ignore the ethical aspect of the issue to avoid moral dissonance and (ii) employ moral disengagement mechanisms in case they become aware about the ethical aspect of less normalized and more intense instances of toxicity. Even when their efforts to morally disengage from the issue at hand fail, players can still be dissuaded to remain in the game by their vested interests.

Consequently, I suggest that a player of a toxic game would choose to leave the game only if (or when) their moral dissonance exceeds the utility they derive from being a member of the toxic illusio. In that sense, this persistence on behalf of the players allows toxic illusio to survive for longer periods of time, despite their toxicity. Therefore, I believe that a theoretically founded study of the mechanisms that lure in and further engage individuals to

toxic illusio is of critical importance to future endeavors to curb the impact of toxic leadership phenomena through follower-focused interventions.

Conclusions

Toxic leadership is one of the most consequential social phenomena that many people encounter daily in different domains of their lives, such as at work or in the political sphere. Followers are the co-creators of this phenomenon as there is no leadership, whether toxic or not, without followers. Yet, we still know very little about followers of toxic leaders. In the present chapter, I build on the literature of toxic leadership, Bourdieu's concepts of illusio and capitals and the construct of personal uncertainty in order to take a step forward towards explicating why and how individuals join a toxic illusio and decide on whether to remain as followers of a toxic leader. Moreover, I argue that individuals join the toxic illusio out of self-interest and that one of their main motivations is to avoid or reduce the personal uncertainty that they feel in that particular domain of their lives. In that sense, the present chapter explores how the worldview and self-concept proposed by the toxic illusio match the individuals' needs to cope with their personal uncertainty and thereby allure individuals to join the toxic game.

Furthermore, I also discuss the dynamics and mechanisms that take place once the individual joins the toxic game and explore how such mechanisms can prolong the lives of toxic illusio by motivating players to remain in the toxic game. Consequently, this chapter brings to our attention the extent of the followers' choices and chances in joining, supporting, complying with, or defecting toxic leadership. My unique framing of the

relationship between followers and the toxic illusio extends the theory of toxic leadership, shedding light to the particular dynamic of joining and staying in the toxic illusio in a way that lends moral agency to the followers as toxic agents who are held partly responsible for the co-construction and sustenance of toxic illusio.

Admittedly, I did not spend time on the reciprocity of the identity and the value creation processes between the leader and the followers as a group. It does not mean that reciprocity of identity creation is not important. In fact, the role of follower constraints in the formulation of the group prototype, as well as the evolution of the social identity as a dynamic process, are very much critical to the leadership process. Although it was out of the scope of the current chapter, I strongly suggest future research to explore the reciprocal aspect of the co-creation mechanisms between the leader and their followers.

It is also important to note that my narrative review, particularly the variants of toxic leaders and followers explored in this chapter, would benefit from gender analyses.

Although I do not delve into gender aspects of toxic leadership, I would like to note three concerns that future research should consider. First, women leaders are at a disadvantage in terms of gender role congruence due to gender biases and gendered social expectations in general (Johnson et al., 2008). Therefore, it would be more difficult for women to become toxic leaders as social expectations around how women should behave could prevent followers to hold on to the toxic illusio if the leader is female. Future research may explore male and female forms of toxic leadership in terms of gendered inhibitors and catalysts such as role congruence. Second, as in the example of Theranos that I mentioned earlier,

the kind of toxic leadership that women practice, such as toxic envy that led Elizabeth Holmes to imitate Steve Jobs in her attire and self-presentation in this particular case (Carreyrou, 2018), could be different than the toxic leadership practices of men. Future research could explicate gender differences in women and men's practices of toxic leadership, exploring issues of power and privilege. Third, the MeToo movement highlighted women are more likely to suffer from sexual harassment and sexual violence (Veissière, 2018). The rampant and entrenched nature of sexual harassment not only hinders women's path to leadership positions but also shapes how they experience toxicity as the victims. More specifically, even when they are disillusioned with the toxic *illusio*, let alone challenging the toxic *illusio* publicly, women might find it harder to exit the game due to systemic coercion, feelings of powerlessness, and oppression mechanisms such as non-disclosure agreements. In that sense, gender might have a profound effect on an individual's experience both when joining and playing in the toxic field as well as in their decision to quit. Future research could explore how gender and power plays out in understanding toxic leaders and their followers. Although I have not explored gender issues in great depth in this narrative review, I would like to call for future research to focus on how women and men practice toxic leadership and followership to what extent their followers may respond in gendered ways to the toxic *illusio*.

There are a number of practical implications within my research. I explained that what makes individuals particularly susceptible to join and remain in the toxic *illusio* is their search for a strong worldview and self-concept. In that sense, it is particularly important to design follower-focused interventions that make individuals less vulnerable to the allure of

toxic leadership, so that they do not join the toxic illusion in the first place. I suggest an initial focus on addressing systemic mechanisms that cause alienation, exclusion, alterity, and isolation, which in turn may lead to high levels of personal uncertainty. Any such interventions can attempt to address ‘perceived injustice’ and ‘social bonds’ of individuals, especially for marginalized groups, to avoid high levels of personal uncertainty. In the same vein, interventions such as equality, diversity, inclusion, industrial democracy, and solidarity could strengthen an individual’s identity formation and reduce the chances of individuals’ susceptibility to join a toxic illusion due to personal uncertainty. Based on my conceptual elaboration in this chapter, I also suggest future research on mechanisms and dynamics that sustain toxic leadership once individuals join the game, such as coercive tactics of the toxic leader, normalization of toxicity, and moral disengagement of the followers.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasize the need for a theoretically founded and organized research program that would systematically explore the mechanisms and dynamics that lead individuals to join and remain in toxic illusion. Indeed, I hope that the present chapter can serve as a first step toward such research by framing the followers of toxic leaders as moral agents that co-create the toxic leadership phenomena and thus enable better informed follower-focused interventions to curb the impact of future toxic leaderships.

*Chapter 4***AUDIENCE ROLES IN LEADERSHIP****EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE FOR A NEW TYPOLOGY**

Despite recent interest in the leadership literature in followers, follower typologies are still overwhelmingly leader centric. As an outgrowth of leader theories, these typologies are constructed based on the value followers offer to leaders and organizations, and do not reflect the followers' individual agency or motives (Crossman & Crossman, 2011; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). In fact, from the most influential and most cited work on followership by Kelley (1988) to the most recent study by Almeida and colleagues (2021), follower typologies adopted the perspective of the leader and/or the organization.

The majority of the previous typologies' role definitions virtually rank followers in terms of their benefit to the leader and his/her vision (e.g., Chaleff, 1995; Kellerman, 2008; Kelley, 1988; Potter & Rosenbach, 2006; J. Steger et al., 1982). Indeed, across these typologies, I can observe a spectrum based on followers' inherent worth and/or usefulness to the actualization of this vision. On one end, there is a common theme of an ideal follower, who is proactive, inquisitive, and independent. The so-called ideal follower voluntarily spends the effort to realize the leader's vision and provide constructive input when necessary (e.g., star followers (Kelley, 2008), superfollower (Steger et al., 1982), and partner (Chaleff, 1995; Potter & Rosenbach, 2006)). On the other end, there are the least desirable followers

with “low levels of commitment and effectiveness” (Crossman & Crossman, 2011, p. 488). These ‘bad’ followers do not believe in or care about the leader’s vision. Therefore, they either resist or do not contribute to its advancement (e.g., alienated (Kelley, 2008), deviant (Steger et al., 1982), and subordinate (Potter & Rosenbach, 2006)). Seen as a source of inefficiency or as an obstacle for the leadership processes, these latter types of followers are not discussed extensively (Collinson, 2006), except to suggest how they can be rehabilitated/integrated into the group as an ideal follower or how they can be identified and pushed out before they cause too much harm (for a recent example, see Bastardoz & van Vugt, 2019).

In the first chapter of my dissertation, I proposed a new leadership approach, the participatory theater framework (PTF), in which leadership is a phenomenon that emerges out of the interactions of leader(s), followers, and non-followers who are critical actors comprising the ‘audience’ to leadership. Accordingly, leadership is the compilation of cooperating and clashing individual agencies of these actors that results in more than mere aggregation of their actions (c.f. Lord & Dinh, 2012). Audience members co-create the leadership phenomenon through the supporter or opposer roles they choose and adopt. I argued that audience roles reflect individuals’ own perception of themselves along two dimensions, namely, attitudes and behaviors towards the leader. Notably, by relaxing the premise of an externally determined organizational goal to judge the inherent worth of group members, PTF proposed eight audience roles (i.e., devoted follower, vigilant follower, covert follower, pragmatic follower, apathetic, survivor, dissenter, rebel; Table 4.1).

Table 0.1: Audience roles proposed by the PTF

PTF Roles	Attitude		Behavior	
	Values	Goals / Outcomes	Intention / Motivation	Activity
Devoted Follower	embraces leader's values	devoted to realization of leader's goals	high support; trusts judgment; does not question decisions and directives	spends time, effort and resources to actively support leader; defends leader against critics
Vigilant Follower	mainly agrees with leader's values	mainly agrees with and supports leader's goals	supports the leader to best of ability; feels it is his/her duty to keep leaders on track	offers proactive feedback (warns, offers constructive criticism)
Covert Follower	mainly agrees with leader's values	mainly agrees with and supports leader's goals	to avoid the cost of being labeled as a supporter of the leader	passive support through covert acts
Pragmatic Follower	no strong attitude about leader's values	leader and opportunities are good personally	supports so long as the policies of the leader aligns with their personal goals	spends effort and resources to ensure continuation and/or realization of benefits
Apathetic	doesn't really care about leader's values	doesn't really care about leader's goals	may believe their involvement does not matter	passive support through tacit consent

Survivor	disagrees with leader's values	disagrees with leader's goals	to survive with least damage to themselves, group, institutions	passive resistance; does not put themselves out
Dissenter	strongly opposes leader's values	strongly opposes leader's goals	wants their opposition to be heard; public about their attitude	actively pursues policy change and reforms by conventional means
Rebel	rejects leader's legitimacy	rejects leader's legitimacy	sees a dire need for a dramatic, urgent change	risk personal costs or harm to resist leader

This chapter attempts to validate the audience typology I proposed in the first chapter of my dissertation. Specifically, I investigated the existence of supporting and opposing audience roles as prototypes based on individuals' attitudes and behaviors towards the leader. The mixed methods study presented in this chapter addresses the call for empirical research on the nature of 'followership' (Blom & Lundgren, 2020; Collinson, 2018) by searching for evidence for the existence of polyphonic audience roles and their associated prototypes. The results of the latent class analysis is expected to support the existence of audience role prototypes up to eight latent classes (i.e., devoted follower, pragmatic follower, conditional follower, work-focused follower, benign apathetic, harmful apathetic, dissenter, revolutionary). Furthermore, these audience roles are expected to be nested within superordinate roles (e.g., 'devoted follower' is a subset of the higher-level role 'supporter') and remain robust across degrees of aggregation (e.g., 'benign apathetic' and 'harmful apathetic' are first identified in four latent class model and remained virtually the same in

five, six, seven, and eight latent class models) as asserted by the PTF.

Methods

1.1.17 Overview

In this mixed-methods study, the aim was to understand whether audience roles exist as prototypes in the minds of respondents and whether these roles are constructed as attitudes and behaviors towards the leader. Accordingly, I asked participants to describe different group members in a typical social group, specifically in terms of their relationship with or reaction to the leader. Participants were suggested to derive examples from their own experiences, as well as the experiences of real people or fictional characters they know. I used open-ended questions (rather than close-ended questions or options) to allow for an unrestricted thinking process. I also conducted a think aloud procedure before data collection to make sure the wording of the instructions is clear and conveys the correct message.

I collected the data from undergraduate students from the Schulich School of Business, York University, Canada. After the initial data cleaning, I identified the audience role prototypes from the data in two steps: (i) quantified the qualitative responses (i.e., descriptive statements from the open-ended questions) by coding the available information, and (ii) ran a series of latent class analyses of the coded data with MPlus software.

1.1.18 Sample

The total sample of the study is 333 undergraduate students from Schulich School of

Business, York University, Toronto, Canada. My task was part of a set of research instruments that included survey instruments for unrelated projects and common demographic questions. Students participated in this research as a part of their course requirements, and they were compensated with grade points.

Demographically, 45% of the participants (n=151) identified as male and 55% of the sample (n= 182) identified as female. The mean age of the sample was 18.84 with the standard deviation of 0.54 years. 37 % of the participants (n=124) were born outside of Canada, with nationalities from almost 30 countries. Cultural diversity of the sample can be considered even higher as 65% of the participants had at least one parent who was born out of Canada.

There were several data quality checks (e.g., attention check) included in the combined survey. Each participant was assigned a flag based on their performances on those checks (i.e., 1 - OK, 0 - not OK). Removing the participants who failed to pass the quality checks, I ended up with 230 participants in my final sample.

Task and Procedure

1.1.19 Phase 1. Think Aloud Procedure

I conducted a think aloud procedure with 6 student research assistants from Schulich School of Business, York University to finalize the design and wording of the task described in *Phase 2* below. I conducted three sessions of two participants each on the same day and voice recorded their thought process with their consent. In each session,

participants were seated across the room from each other with several dividers in between and Dr. Chris Bell and Dr. Zeynep Ayca were also present in the room to supervise and facilitate the process.

Think aloud procedure identifies where the participants get confused or have trouble in understanding, thereby ensuring that the participants have an accurate internal representation of each question, do not have to re-read questions, and give a full answer (Trenor et al., 2011). As described in Charters (2003), there was a pre-task orientation to reduce the ‘cold-start effect’. I briefly explained what think aloud procedure is to reduce their anxiety, but I did not mention the topic of my task to avoid researcher modeling bias. I used a ‘KEEP TALKING’ sign to prompt the participants to verbalize their thoughts without interfering. I also had an exit interview to help interpret the think aloud data (Davis & Bistodeau, 1993).

1.1.20 Phase 2. Task

In a computerized task, I asked each participant to write down the descriptions of a group member type that they can think of and briefly explain their attitudes and behaviors towards the leader (Table 4.2). On the first screen, there were four separate text boxes for participants to describe different types of group members, each one labeled with a title (e.g., ‘Member Type A’, ‘Member Type B’). To emphasize that the attitudes and behaviors towards the leader can be both positive and negative, I also included a heatmap with x (behavior) and y (attitude) axes and asked the participant to click where each group member type falls. I used a forced response rule to ensure that each participant came up

with at least four member types to move on to the next page. Once the participants were done with those four definitions, an additional text box and heat map with the same instructions appeared on a new screen. This additional screen was repeated until the participant exhausted the definitions they could generate and left the text box empty.

Table 0.2: Instruction text

Instruction text	Think about a typical social group (e.g., work group). In this group there is a leader. All other members can have different attitudes and behaviors towards the leader. We want you to describe these different group members. The description should be about the relationship with and reaction to the leader, not just the group member's personality. The descriptions of these group members can be hypothetical or based on your past experiences and the experiences of the people you know.
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Data Structure and Analysis Strategy

1.1.21 Data Structure

Most participants chose to write descriptions for only the first four member types, so I decided to use/code only these descriptions, resulting in 920 (230x4) descriptive statements in total. Independent coders ensured the quality of the descriptions included in the latent class analyses and they eliminated irrelevant (e.g., not enough information to code) entries as 'not codable'. I will provide more information about the coders in the next section ('coding').

Descriptive statements consisted of the combination of two open-ended questions, i.e., group member type definition and its explanation (e.g., “A loyal follower of the leader would agree with everything he/she suggests and work to complete their plan to perfection. They will have a positive attitude towards the leader's ideas and enthusiastic about implementing them”).

1.1.22 Coding

Each descriptive statement was coded separately by two independent coders (graduate sociology students from York University) in 17 coding sessions. Coders were unaware of the hypotheses and did not read any participatory theater framework related material, ensuring their conceptual blindness. Coding sessions were relatively short (2-3 hours with breaks) and over a period of 11 weeks, so that the material and rules were always fresh. Additionally, a warm-up exercise with a random selection of the items was conducted before each coding session to make sure the independent coders agree on the meaning and application of the codes.

The code library was created by the independent coders with very little guidance from me, based on the information patterns found in the data (DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011) and it consists of 38 codes (Table 4.3). More specifically, if either of the coders believed that a piece of information is repeated in several descriptive statements and requires a new code, he or she discussed it with the other coder. When both coders agreed on the need for and the meaning of the new code, it was added to the code library. New codes were also categorized under a type (e.g., attitude, behavior, motivation) and assigned an example by

the coders for future reference and clarification.

Table 0.3: Code library

ID	Code	Type	Examples
1	Positive attitude towards work	Attitude	"This member is very positive and enthusiastic about the project"
2	Neutral attitude towards work	Attitude	"This person does not care about the work"
3	Negative attitude towards work	Attitude	"negative [...] attitude about the assignment"
4	Positive attitude towards leader	Attitude	"This member does have a positive attitude towards the leader" / "Member A admires the leader"
5	Neutral attitude towards leader	Attitude	"This group member does not really car[e] who is the leader of the group"
6	Negative attitude towards leader	Attitude	"This member has a negative attitude toward the leader" / "This member does not like the leader"
7	Positive attitude towards leader's vision	Attitude	"This member [...] has the same vision as the leader." / "a determined and dedicated follower of the leader, who views the leader as always right"
8	Neutral attitude towards leader's vision	Attitude	"does not care for the leader's thoughts or opinions"
9	Negative attitude towards leader's vision	Attitude	"This person disagrees with the leader's direction" / "This member does not like [...] the

			way the leader runs the work group"
10	Positive attitude towards the group	Attitude	"positive attitude towards [...] other group members" / "this challenge is not in an attempt to start conflict, but to further the team and improve."
11	Neutral attitude towards the group	Attitude	"They really don't care enough about [...] the people around them." / "member C has neutral attitude with some engagements with the rest of the team"
12	Negative attitude towards the group	Attitude	"This person really believes that they know better and can work better alone."
13	Respectful	Attitude	"He/ She respects the leader"
14	Envious	Attitude	"envious" / "they may want to have too much control and be jealous of the leader and clash with them."
15	Rejects leader's legitimacy	Attitude	"They almost believe that this person is only a leader in title but not in reality. They don't accept them as a leader"
16	Enthusiastic	Behavior	"Very enthusiastic, helps the leader with ideas, gives positive feedback and constructive criticism when needed" / "enthusiastic behavior"
17	Compliant	Behavior	"just wants to complete the project and get a decent mark" / "does their work and nothing more"

18	Hostile	Behavior	"this member has a negative and hostile attitude towards the leader." / "hostile and unenthusiastic "
19	Ingratiation	Behavior	"they try to use their attitude as a positive skill to get closer with the leader and ensure that their demands are being met." / "They are very enthusiastic around the leader as th[e]y want to look good at their job"
20	Unquestioning follower	Behavior	"Member type A is the blind follower; looks up to the leader and wants to be them and follows their every command."
21	Devoted to realizing the leader's vision	Behavior	"They will have a positive attitude towards the leader's ideas and enthusiastic about implementing them"
22	Challenger	Behavior	"Someone who challenges the ideas of the leader" / "Opposes the leader and questions their leadership because they feel more qualified"
23	Ensuring group cohesiveness	Behavior	"The assistant is helping the leader with keeping the group intact" / "they keep everyone intact."
24	Careless about work (not complete, late, etc.)	Behavior	"not completing work on time" / "Somebody that always agrees to completing a task, but does not exactly fulfill it"

25	Attitudes expressed	Behavior	"will speak out when they feel like their voice should be heard" / "he makes sure everyone knows that he isn't happy with what he's working on."
26	Attitudes not expressed	Behavior	"Shy and quiet" / "He does not share much of his own opinions "
27	Conditional Support	Behavior	"They are enthusiastic when the leader makes good decisions but may be more apathetic or even hostile when bad decisions are made."
28	Leader's inner circle (socially proximal relationship)	Relationship	"The one close with the leader" / "have a good relationship"
29	Leader's second in command	Relationship	"Second in Command" / "Essentially like the leader['s] right hand man/woman."
30	Outcast or outer circle	Relationship	"a bad relationship" / "they will try to be as distant from the leader"
31	To achieve status (respect / admiration)	Motivation	"enjoys being associated with their [leader's] greatness " / "Someone who strives to become that leader one day."
32	Affiliation relation	Motivation	"he/she wants to stay on the leaders good side"
33	Fear	Motivation	"Someone who has great ideas, but decides not to share them because they are afraid of the leader."

34	Instrumental / material benefit	Motivation	"This person will enjoy the leader as they will go to them to help complete their tasks when they can't."
35	Cares about the work	Motivation	"he/she loves what he/she is doing" / "Member Type C has an enthusiastic behavior because they [...] believe it is worth doing"
36	Doesn't care about the work	Motivation	"They really don't care enough about the project"
37	Evaluation (negative)	Evaluation	"lazy, not punctual, not a team player, liability" / "Counterproductive"
38	Evaluation (positive)	Evaluation	"conscientious" / "Very smart and happy"

During the sessions, coders read each descriptive statement separately but simultaneously and wrote down the codes that they think best match the information pieces provided (e.g., Table 4.4). They then compared the codes they assigned to the descriptive statement with each other and agreed on the final list of codes before moving onto the next one. Coders assigned as many codes as needed to each descriptive statement such that the number of codes assigned to descriptive statements ranges from 2 to 6 codes with an average of 3.36 codes. When the coding of all 920 descriptive statements were completed, the same coders went back and re-coded the first hundred descriptive statements to make sure the meaning and the application of the codes were consistent with later uses.

Table 0.4: Coding examples

Descriptive statement	Codes
“This person likes the other team members but does not like being lead so they do not respect the leader. Though they're attitude about the work itself may be positive, they are hostile towards the leader because they do not like being told what to do.”	- Positive attitude towards work - Positive attitude towards group - Hostile - Negative attitude towards leader
“good relationship and agrees with leader. If there is a good relationship between the leader and member A, they will exhibit enthusiastic and positive attitude as they will want to stay close with the leader and ensure that all of the leader's ideas are respected”	- Leader’s inner circle - Enthusiastic - Positive attitude towards leader - Affiliation relation with the leader - Devoted to realizing the leader’s vision

The aim of this process was to code (and thereby, quantify for clustering analyses) the entirety of the available information from the descriptive statement. Each code represents a piece of information (e.g., envious, challenger, positive attitude towards leader, compliant) and the assigned group of codes describe the descriptive statements when combined. Note that, people give different weights to attributes and may perceive some attributes as more central than others (Asch, 1946; Nauts et al., 2014). As such, the absence of a code in a participant’s description does not necessarily mean that the described group member type does not have that attribute in aggregate. For instance, the ‘Dissenter’ cluster has the code ‘hostile’ as a dominant attribute with 0.476 latent class attribute percentage (see Table 4.8), yet a participant’s description can be classified under that cluster by the algorithm even if it

does not have the ‘hostile’ code, because it has other dominant attributes of the cluster such as ‘negative attitude towards leader’, ‘rejects leader's legitimacy’, and ‘attitudes expressed’.

Inter-rater reliability between the independent coders was high with only 4.5% disagreement rate (140 disagreement / 3087 total codes assigned). Unfortunately, the widely used Cohen's Kappa and Fleiss' Kappa are not applicable in this structure because the independent coders assigned more than one code to each item and the number of assigned codes were not fixed between items and coders. Out of 920 descriptive statements that were coded, independent coders completely agreed in 805 of them (87.5%). Disagreements were resolved through discussion between the two coders and in the rare (i.e., less than 2%) event of coders continued disagreement, the first author acted as the final decision maker.

1.1.23 Data Cleaning and LCA Analysis

I removed 194 descriptive statements that were coded as ‘uncodable’, meaning that there was no relevant information. For instance, some descriptive statements described a personality type (e.g., “well achieving, hard working, positive; this person is the best kind of group member as they are the most efficient and easy to work with”), while others provided too thin of a description to be coded (e.g., “not working; someone who wants to succeed but doesn't show it with his/her actions”). I also removed 38 descriptive statements that had more than 33% inter-rater disagreement rate and ended up with 688 statements in total. I then transformed the coded data to a binary matrix (i.e., one-hot encoding) in Python using the pandas library (pandas.pydata.org) (for sample data structure, see Appendix 4A).

Next, I combined the codes from the same category (e.g., positive attitude towards leader, neutral attitude towards leader, and negative attitude towards leader as *attitudes towards leader* and enthusiastic, compliant, and hostile as *behavior type*) and removed the codes that were irrelevant to the analyses presented (i.e., item sentiment evaluation and relationship with leader). I ended up with 7 ordinal and 14 binary variables, totaling to 21 variables and 688 descriptive statements in the analyses. As expected, the codes for attitudes towards the leader and behavior type were the most frequently used, yet the frequency of the remaining codes is also adequate to allow for a finer definition of the emergent types (Figure 4.1).

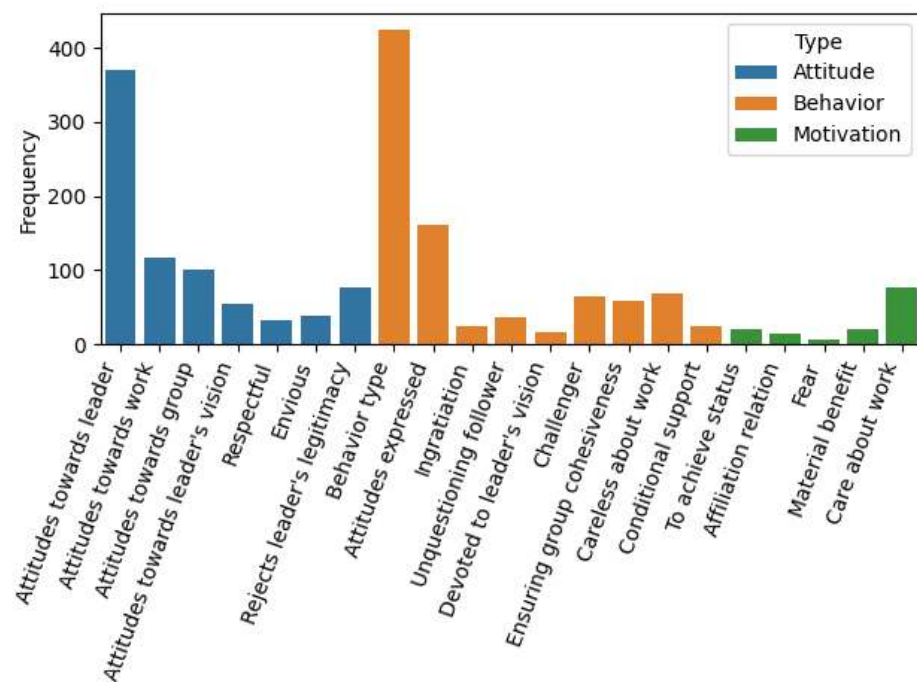


Figure 0.1: Code frequencies

My main aim with the quantitative analysis of this data was to discover the naturally occurring clusters within the sample. To that end, I used the latent class analysis (LCA)

function from the MPLUS statistics program. There are several ways to cluster data today such as two-step clustering in SPSS, hierarchical clustering algorithms and Bayesian multinomial mixture models with different distance matrices (e.g., Jaccard, 1912; Tanimoto, 1958) in R, and Scikit-learn machine learning clustering algorithms (e.g., Gaussian mixture - McLachlan, 1989; Ward, 1963) in Python. Yet, most clustering algorithms focus on more traditional data structures such as dense matrices with only a few missing data. MPLUS' mixture modeling algorithm was the only one that was equipped to handle my sparse and categorical data matrix in which the nonexistence of a code in two descriptive statements does not necessarily mean a similarity between them.

MPLUS User Guide describes mixture modeling and latent class analysis as follows:

“Mixture modeling refers to modeling with categorical latent variables that represent subpopulations where population membership is not known but is inferred from the data. This is referred to as finite mixture modeling in statistics (McLachlan & Peel, 2000). A special case is latent class analysis (LCA) where the latent classes explain the relationships among the observed dependent variables similar to factor analysis. In contrast to factor analysis, however, LCA provides classification of individuals.”
(Muthén & Muthén, 2007, Chapter 7)

In line with the advice from the extensive User Guide, I used ‘mixture’ as the analysis type.

A sample MPLUS code for eight cluster LCA (Appendix A1), as well as the original output files for each latent class analysis (Appendix A2) are available in the appendix of this chapter.

Results

The results of the latent class analyses provide strong evidence for the existence of meaningful audience role prototypes up to eight latent classes (i.e., devoted follower, pragmatic follower, conditional follower, work-focused follower, benign apathetic, harmful apathetic, dissenter, revolutionary). These audience roles nest within superordinate roles and they remain robust across degrees of aggregation as PTF suggested.

1.1.24 Model Identification and Evaluation

In clustering models, it is important to check the model identification and fit because clusters can be statistical artifacts or theoretically meaningless. Model identification is the degree to which there is sufficient information in the sample observations to estimate the parameters in a proposed model (McCutcheon, 2011). While assessing model identification, using different sets of random starting (seed) values is important because it leads to the identification of the global maximum. The best solution among these random seed trials is the solution with the largest log likelihood and it must be repeated in at least two or more runs. If the solution is reached only once in all random seed trials, it might be a local solution (i.e., there may be a better, global solution).

The model identification results of my analyses are consistent with the participatory theater

framework conceptualization of an 8-role audience typology. More specifically, my LCA models with two (higher order categories of supporters and opposers) to eight (specific roles) classes all replicated, demonstrating the existence of a global solution that ensures the robustness of the identified clusters in each analysis. Nine class LCA, on the other hand, did not replicate the best log likelihood value in the random seed test, meaning that the results are likely to be an artifact of getting stuck at a local maxima point. Since the fact that the nine class LCA model was not identified meant that there was not enough data in the sample to estimate nine latent classes, I did not run the models for more clusters.

There are several measures to evaluate the model fit. According to Geiser (2012), Akaike's information criteria (AIC; Akaike, 1974), Bayesian information criteria (BIC; Schwartz, 2001), sample size adjusted BIC (SSABIC; Sclove, 1987), and entropy (Ramaswamy et al., 1993) are the most commonly used and trusted quantifiable measures of model fit. Each of these criteria measures a slightly different aspect of the model. For instance, while AIC, BIC, and SSABIC measure the goodness of fit, entropy is the degree of classification accuracy (between 0 and 1). A model with a lower AIC, BIC, and SSABIC and a higher entropy has a better fit with the data. In addition to these quantifiable criteria, interpretability of the output as a non-quantifiable evaluation criterion is also important, especially in theory-based research (Geiser, 2012).

In the participatory theater framework, individuals in each audience role form respective audience role groups that can be aggregated into superordinate camps in the topology of the audience. In other words, the theory predicts that the audience roles identified in a model

with more clusters (e.g., LCA with six latent classes) are subclasses of the superordinate clusters identified by models with fewer clusters (e.g., LCA with three latent classes).

As expected, my analysis revealed that the clusters identified by LCA models with more latent classes are nested under the clusters of LCA models with less latent classes and as the number of latent classes increased, identifiable subclasses became distinguishable (for more information, see the discussion for Figure 4.2). Such subsuming relationship between the LCAs with different numbers of latent classes means that none of the models are necessarily a better representation of the audience than the rest. Accordingly, measuring slightly different aspects of the model's results, each quantifiable evaluation criteria points to a separate analysis as best fit (Table 4.5). Interpretability, as the non-quantifiable criteria, also supports this view (for more information, see the discussion for Table 4.8).

Table 0.5: Model evaluation criteria

	LCA (2)	LCA (3)	LCA (4)	LCA (5)	LCA (6)	LCA (7)	LCA (8)
AIC	10360.881	9971.084	9883.843	9818.891	9770.822	9728.047	9710.126
BIC	10664.645	10428.997	10495.904	10585.101	10691.181	10802.555	10938.783
SSABIC	10451.91	10108.306	10067.259	10048.5	10046.626	10050.044	10078.317
Entropy	0.882	0.856	0.886	0.846	0.876	0.869	0.883

1.1.25 Latent Classes

Results provide strong evidence for the existence of an audience role typology similar to

that suggested by the participatory theater framework. Moreover, when I increase the number of latent classes in the analysis, audience role prototypes (i.e., identified latent classes) get more particular and nuanced. For instance, when I run the LCA with two latent classes, I end up with a class consisting of leader opposing attributes and a class that combines leader supporting and apathetic attributes. As I increase the number of classes, these two classes consecutively split up to eight classes (i.e., devoted follower, pragmatic follower, conditional follower, work-focused follower, benign apathetic, harmful apathetic, dissenter, and revolutionary) that are increasingly more nuanced versions of the previous levels (Figure 4.2).

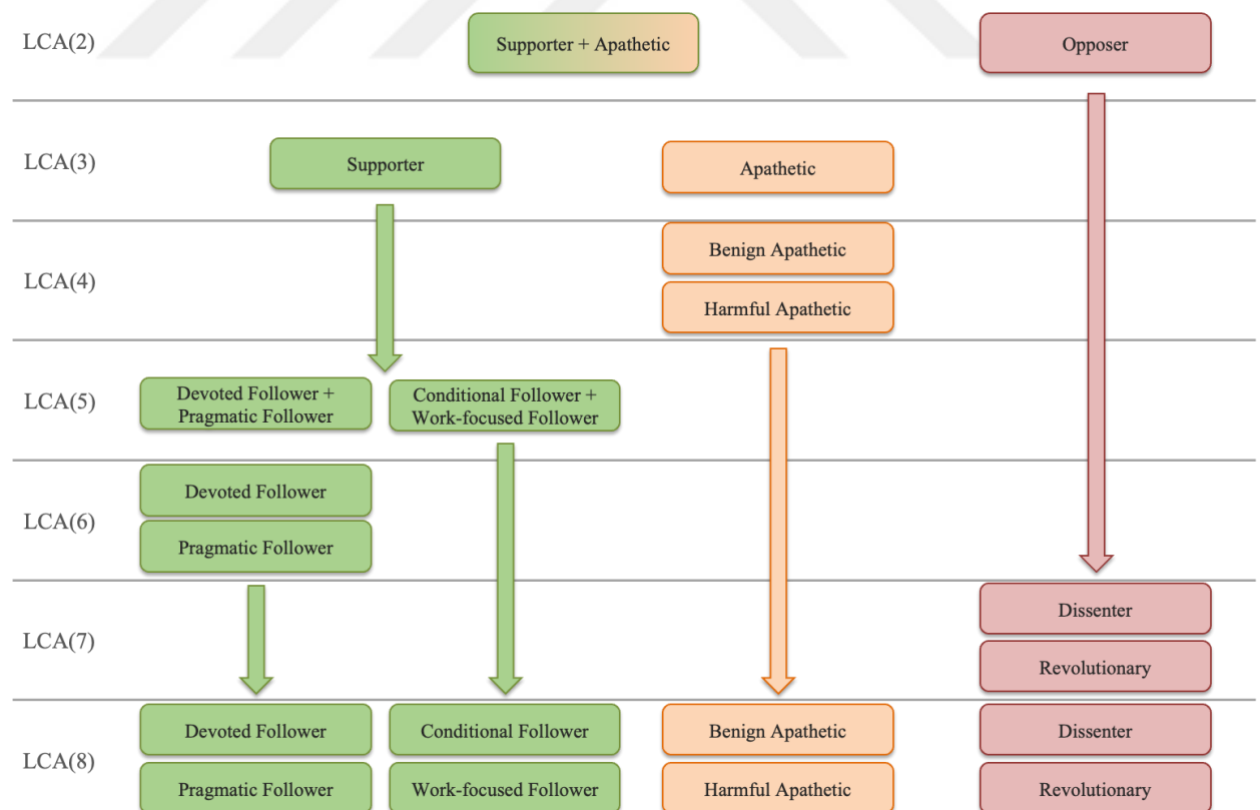


Figure 0.2: Latent classes across LCAs

Latent classes can be understood by looking at their dominant features (i.e., latent class attributes). More specifically, I assess the latent class attributes in probability scale, which is the probability of each of the 21 codes from the code library being present in a random member of that latent class. My results show that the latent class attributes are robust across the number of clusters in my analysis. In other words, when I increase the number of latent classes, the list of most dominant attributes (codes) of the identified latent class remains virtually the same as well as the probabilities of those attributes. For instance, ‘devoted follower’ is identified in LCA(6) first and remains

Table 0.6: Latent class attributes in probability scale for Devoted Follower

Code	LCA (8)	LCA (7)	LCA (6)
Positive attitude towards leader	0.74	0.728	0.712
Enthusiastic	0.524	0.529	0.526
Unquestioning follower	0.193	0.201	0.191
Respectful	0.151	0.145	0.139
Positive attitude towards leader's vision	0.131	0.139	0.134
Compliant	0.122	0.121	0.117
Devoted to leader's vision	0.114	0.113	0.107
Positive attitude towards group	0.106	0.109	0.106
Ensures group cohesiveness	0.095	0.101	0.119
Positive attitude towards work	0.058	0.07	0.072

Robustness of the identified latent classes is also evident through the distribution of sample observations into clusters across LCAs. More specifically, the number of observations that fall under each of LCA (3) superordinate categories (i.e., supporter, apathetic, and opposer) in LCA (8) remains very similar to the distribution of observations in LCA (3), demonstrating the stability of clusters across analyses (Table 4.7). Furthermore, the distribution of observations is relatively uniform between these three superordinate categories (e.g., 36% supporter, 34% apathetic, and 30% opposing in eight cluster LCA).

Table 0.7: Final class counts and proportions based on the estimated LCA(3) and LCA(8) models

LCA (8) Latent Classes	LCA (8) Count (%)	LCA (8) Aggregate Count (%)	LCA (3) Latent Classes	LCA (3) Count (%)
Devoted Follower	120 (17%)	252 (36%)	Supporter	247 (36%)
Pragmatic Follower	22 (3%)			
Conditional Follower	30 (5%)			
Work-focused Follower	80 (11%)			
Benign Apathetic	165 (24%)	232 (34%)	Apathetic	241 (35%)
Harmful Apathetic	67 (10%)			
Dissenter	135 (20%)	204 (30%)	Opposer	200 (29%)
Revolutionary	69 (10%)			

I named the clusters based on the most dominant attributes in each (Table 4.8). Short descriptions of the audience role prototypes based on their latent class attributes in probability scales in LCA(8) is as follows:

Devoted followers have positive attitudes towards the leader and his/her vision, and they enthusiastically support the leader with their behaviors. They are respectful, compliant, unquestioning followers. Examples for the descriptive statements that were clustered as devoted follower: “[This group member] Is a determined and dedicated follower of the leader, who views the leader as always right. [He/she] is a dedicated believer and follower of the leader, who is always enthusiastic about the leader's ideas and positive towards them.” and “The person who blindly follows the leader. They never see anything wrong with the leader's decisions (even if there is something wrong) and like them. This person would follow the leader to the end of the world.”

Pragmatic followers do not necessarily have strong positive attitudes towards the leader, his/her vision, the group or the work but they enthusiastically support the leader and ingratiate, possibly to reach some desired end result. Examples for the descriptive statements that were clustered as pragmatic follower: “Kiss up and does everything a leader says. They are going to want to work hard to impress the leader” and “Individual who is neutral about the leader but wants the leader to like them. This individual may work harder to get the leader to like them but they do not care for the leader as much.”

Conditional followers express their opinions and support the leader as long as they agree with him/her. But when they do, they do so enthusiastically. They value group cohesiveness and although they are respectful, they might challenge the leader when they

think he or she is not right. Examples for the descriptive statements that were clustered as conditional follower: “They will support the leader's good ideas but will also point out bad ideas. [This group member] has a relatively positive attitude because they are general supporters of the leader; they are open to accepting the leader's directions. However, their behavior is closer to neutral because they are enthusiastic when the leader makes good decisions but may be more apathetic or even hostile when bad decisions are made.” and “[This group member] challenges the leader’s thinking and questions every potential decision or action to better understand the risk. [He/she] does not sugar coat, offers their true opinion, even if against leader's view, however does so out of trying to be helpful.”

Work-focused followers care a lot about the work, and they enthusiastically do their duties. They have a positive attitude towards the group and value group cohesiveness, possibly because it contributes to better work outcomes. Examples for the descriptive statements that were clustered as work-focused follower: “Member is willing to help and always on board to complete work with the leader. This member is always willing to help and motivated to complete work. He/she understands the importance of working together as a team to achieve success.” and “This member is always ready for work, looks forward to achieving his or her tasks and is ok with making mistakes. The member always keeps her head up with her positive attitude and is excited to do work.”

Benign apathetics have neutral attitudes towards the leader, group, and work. They do comply with what is expected of them, perhaps minimally, and keep their opinions to themselves. Examples for the descriptive statements that were clustered as benign apathetic: “This member does not care what happens and does not contribute much,

negatively or positively. They just want to get the job done a.s.a.p. and do not want to argue or contribute.” and “This group member does not really care who is the leader of the group and just wants to complete the project and get a decent mark. She/he takes a more neutral approach.”

Harmful apathetics do not like the work that they are expected to do, and they make their feelings known. Their dislike of the work can lead to (or perceived as) carelessness about their work outcomes. Examples for the descriptive statements that were clustered as harmful apathetic: “[This group member] doesn't do any work or care about the group's tasks. [He/she] does not want to be there and just wants to do the least amount of work possible. This creates a hostile work environment when he complains about his tasks, the members and the fact that he doesn't want to be there.” and “[This group member] does not care about any of the members including the leader. This member is not dedicated to their work, and does not care about their group members or efforts in this group work.”

Dissenters have negative attitudes towards the leader, leader's vision, group, and work. They exhibit hostile behavior and express their overwhelmingly negative opinions. They are considered to be jealous of the leader and careless about their work. Examples for the descriptive statements that were clustered as dissenter: “This member does not like the leader at all, they despise them. They wish someone else was their leader. They think the leader is rude, and unhelpful towards them.” and “This member dislikes the leader's management style and is unmotivated to complete tasks. If they dislike the leader, they will have a negative attitude towards their work and may illustrate hostile behavior towards that person and to the company.”

Revolutionaries strongly disagree with the leader and his/her vision, and they speak up their minds. They are challengers who reject the leader's legitimacy. Their challenge has the potential to be seen as envy or hostility. Examples for the descriptive statements that were clustered as revolutionary: "This member criticizes the leader, challenges them, and thinks that they would be more effective in the leader's position." and "This member is assertive and clashes with the leader because of differing opinions and ideas. This member wants to also take control and do what they want despite what the leader decides."

Table 0.8: Dominant attributes of audience role prototypes

Audience Role Prototype	Code	Latent Class Attribute (%)
Devoted Follower	Positive attitude towards leader	0.74
	Enthusiastic	0.524
	Unquestioning follower	0.193
	Respectful	0.151
	Positive attitude towards leader's vision	0.131
	Compliant	0.122
	Devoted to leader's vision	0.114
	Positive attitude towards group	0.106
	Ensures group cohesiveness	0.095

	Positive attitude towards work	0.058
	Achieve status	0.051
Pragmatic Follower	Ingratiation	1
	Enthusiastic	0.547
	Affiliation with leader	0.456
	Unquestioning follower	0.183
	Material/Instrumental benefit	0.183
	Negative attitude towards leader	0.181
	Achieve status	0.137
	Positive attitude towards leader	0.137
	Attitudes not expressed	0.135
Conditional Follower	Attitudes expressed	1
	Conditional support	0.612
	Enthusiastic	0.57
	Positive attitude towards leader	0.305
	Respectful	0.226
	Cares about work	0.19
	Ensures group cohesiveness	0.161

	Positive attitude towards group	0.086
	Challenger	0.078
	Devoted to leader's vision	0.061
Work-focused Follower	Enthusiastic	0.567
	Positive attitude towards work	0.452
	Ensures group cohesiveness	0.439
	Cares about work	0.253
	Positive attitude towards group	0.208
	Neutral attitude towards leader	0.139
	Positive attitude towards leader	0.132
	Attitudes expressed	0.097
	Material/Instrumental benefit	0.071
Benign Apathetic	Compliant	0.887
	Neutral attitude towards leader	0.429
	Attitudes not expressed	0.117
	Neutral attitude towards group	0.11
	Doesn't care about work	0.088
	Neutral attitude towards work	0.084

Harmful Apathetic	Careless about work	0.61
	Doesn't care about work	0.487
	Neutral attitude towards leader	0.277
	Attitudes expressed	0.15
	Neutral attitude towards group	0.144
	Negative attitude towards work	0.133
Dissenter	Negative attitude towards leader	0.647
	Hostile	0.476
	Rejects leader's legitimacy	0.308
	Envious	0.189
	Negative attitude towards group	0.172
	Attitudes expressed	0.164
	Careless about work	0.152
	Negative attitude towards work	0.146
	Negative attitude towards leader's vision	0.143
Revolutionary	Challenger	0.875
	Attitudes expressed	0.777
	Rejects leader's legitimacy	0.517

	Negative attitude towards leader	0.483
	Hostile	0.424
	Envious	0.166
	Negative attitude towards leader's vision	0.082
	Negative attitude towards group	0.078

Discussion

The goal of this study was to investigate whether the audience roles I introduced in the first chapter of my dissertation exist in people's minds as prototypes. Accordingly, I collected qualitative descriptions from the participants, had two independent and conceptually blind coders quantify the information provided in those descriptions, and finally ran several latent class analyses to discover and interpret the audience roles from the data.

My results demonstrate the existence of eight audience role prototypes (i.e., devoted follower, pragmatic follower, conditional follower, work-focused follower, benign apathetic, harmful apathetic, dissenter, and revolutionary) distinguished by their attitudes and behaviors as the PTF suggests. Majority of these role prototypes are very similar to the audience roles proposed by the participatory theater framework in terms of their dominant attributes. More specifically, the set of attitudes and behaviors that characterize the audience roles introduced by the participatory theater framework closely resembles the

attitude and behavior codes frequently found in six of the eight of the latent classes in my analysis (Table 4.9).

Table 0.9: Similarities between the attributes of PTF audience roles and the LCA role prototypes

PTF name / LCA name	PTF role attributes	LCA role attributes
Devoted Follower	<i>Attitude:</i> Highly positive attitude towards the leader and leader's vision	<i>Attitude:</i> Positive attitude towards leader and leader's vision
	<i>Behavior:</i> Active support - does what is asked to the best of their ability, does not question decisions and directives	<i>Behavior:</i> Enthusiastic and compliant, unquestioning follower, respectful
Pragmatic Follower	<i>Attitude:</i> High personal goal alignment; value alignment is not critical	<i>Attitude:</i> Motivated by material/instrumental benefit and desire to have an affiliation relationship with leader
	<i>Behavior:</i> Active support - does what is required to achieve the personal goal	<i>Behavior:</i> Ingratiation, enthusiastic, unquestioning follower
Vigilant Follower / Conditional Follower	<i>Attitude:</i> Mainly agrees with the leader's values and goals	<i>Attitude:</i> Positive attitude towards leader and group
	<i>Behavior:</i> Proactive support - supports the leader to best of ability; feels it is his/her duty to keep leaders on track; warns and offers constructive criticism	<i>Behavior:</i> Attitudes expressed, conditional support, enthusiastic
Apathetic / Benign Apathetic	<i>Attitude:</i> Neutral about the leader, leader's vision and goals	<i>Attitude:</i> Neutral attitude towards leader, group, and work
	<i>Behavior:</i> Passive support - enables the leader through tacit consent and passivity	<i>Behavior:</i> Compliant, attitudes not expressed

Dissenter	<i>Attitude:</i> Negative attitude towards leader, leader's vision or goals	<i>Attitude:</i> Negative attitude towards leader, rejects leader's legitimacy
	<i>Behavior:</i> Active opposition - pursues policy change and reforms, wants their opposition to be heard	<i>Behavior:</i> Hostile, attitudes expressed
Rebel / Revolutionary	<i>Attitude:</i> Highly negative attitude towards leader, leader's vision and goals	<i>Attitude:</i> Negative attitude towards leader and leader's vision, rejects leader's legitimacy
	<i>Behavior:</i> Proactive opposition - sees a dire need for a dramatic, urgent change, risk personal costs or harm to resist leader	<i>Behavior:</i> Challenger, attitudes expressed, hostile

The two remaining roles of the PTF typology (i.e., covert follower and survivor) are characterized by their use of strategic impression management tactics in order to hide their support or opposition to the leader, and hence, particularly vulnerable to the problem of attribution (for more detail, see the 'Problem of attribution' subsection below). More specifically, the attitudes and behaviors that characterize 'covert follower' and 'survivor' are most likely to be perceived as the dominant attributes of 'work-focused follower' and 'harmful apathetic', respectively, by others. For instance, the survivor role in PTF typology is defined by their negative attitudes towards the leader and their passive opposition. Survivors try to survive with least damage to themselves, group, institutions and avoid being labeled as opposers, yet they resist covertly whenever they can (e.g., purposefully slow down work, create obstacles). Their passive opposition might be perceived as carelessness about work, which is the most dominant attribute of the LCA role 'harmful apathetic'. Covert followers, on the other hand, have a positive attitude towards the leader

but they support him/her passively. Covert followers try to avoid the cost of being labeled as a supporter of the leader, perhaps because they are surrounded by opposers or they are afraid of being seen as a lackey, so they feign neutrality towards the leader. Their passive support (e.g., completing work in full and on time, doing more than the minimum requirement) can be perceived as commitment to work and enthusiasm, which are the two most dominant attributes of the LCA role ‘work-focused follower’.

To summarize, this mixed-methods study provides an initial empirical proof that the audience typology I suggested in the first chapter of my dissertation is mostly accurate and applicable in real life leadership phenomena. The results I present in this chapter are also crucial as this study is the first of its kind in a generalized leadership context (Almeida et al., 2021) and answers the call by leadership scholars to learn more about ‘followership’ (Blom & Lundgren, 2020; Collinson, 2018). Nevertheless, leadership researchers and practitioners need to know a lot more about the ‘audience’. Below I discuss a number of key areas in which the current study is limited, and future research can benefit our understanding of leadership significantly:

Limitations and Future Directions

1.1.26 Sample

In this study, I used a convenience sample of undergraduate students from Schulich School of Business, York University. With an average age of 18.84 (s.d. 0.54 years) and a common lack of work experience, one of the key limitations of my study is the inexperience of my sample in various adult leadership contexts such as work to draw their descriptions from.

Instead, participants provided examples of group member types from a variety of sources such as their own experiences in homework groups, their favorite TV-shows (e.g., *The Office*), and their families.

Following Mead (1934) and social constructivist approaches (e.g., Blumer, 1969; Stryker, 1980), PTF proposes that a limited number of intuitive audience roles have evolved out of people's social experiences, interactions, categorization and typing processes (Klapp, 1954). If it's true that the more experience a person has in diverse social interactions, the more nuanced and well-defined his or her audience role prototypes might become, the inexperienced nature of my sample may prove to be a conservative bias for the variety and clarity of the identified roles. Nevertheless, people might have significantly different sets of audience role prototypes in different stages of their lives and future research can help researchers and practitioners to better understand inter-generational conflict as well as to develop targeted audience interventions.

Furthermore, future research is needed to understand whether the set of the audience role prototypes I identified in this study is universal. As described above, my sample contains perspectives of individuals from different cultural backgrounds, providing my analysis a conservative bias in terms of finding common prototypes when compared with a more conventional convenience sample. Although the robustness of my results demonstrates that audience roles as group member prototypes based on individuals' attitudes and behaviors towards the leader are shared in different cultures, the actual number of audience role prototypes as well as their specific attributes can differ across cultures.

1.1.27 Problem of Attribution

My approach to this first exploration of the audience role typology was to canvas peoples' descriptions of the prototypical group members. In other words, participants described not only the audience roles they adopted now or in the past, but also the ones they observed others (e.g., insubordination, ingratiation, indifference) in fiction and in real life. This methodology may introduce a problem of attribution because the participants did not know the actual values, goals, attitudes, and motivations of others and simply described what they think when they observe a pattern of behaviors in others. Consequently, the role prototypes I found in this study (especially the ones with a negative connotation) can diverge significantly from how individuals who adopt these roles see themselves. For instance, participants tended to describe supporter roles with positive adjectives (i.e., 'exceptional', 'superb') but frequently used derogatory adjectives such as 'lazy' and 'jealous' for leader-opposing roles. Indeed, two of the codes with the most negative connotation (i.e., 'envious' and 'careless about work') were among the dominant attributes of two out of three opposer audience roles.

It should be noted that, the discrepancy between the conceptualizations of supporter and opposer roles is noteworthy because it points to a common attitude towards group health and functionality. My results indicate that people prefer a cohesive group and will see dissent as a negative disruptive force in a typical leadership context. Considering the disproportionate use of positive and negative adjectives mentioned above, it can be said that people are more likely to empathize with supporter prototypes than opposer prototypes when they imagine a typical leadership situation.

1.1.28 Assessing the Individual's Audience Role

Audience roles are the first step to understanding how individuals in groups co-create leadership, including the determination of the common goal as well as its accomplishment. Audience members are social agents with their own attitudes, motivations, and strategic behavior, who can cooperate and clash with others to achieve their own goals; and they exert their agency through their audience roles. Yet, to utilize the construct of audience roles in research and practice, there must be a valid and reliable assessment tool and analysis methodology that enables accurate categorization of group members.

There are a few points that should be considered while developing such an assessment tool. First, both the PTF and the empirical results presented in this chapter suggest that individuals are not adequately represented by their behaviors alone and attitudes are also crucial. Therefore, the audience role assessment tool should aim to estimate both the individual's attitudes and behaviors towards the leader as separate dimensions. Second, the PTF depends on individuals' own perceptions of the attitudinal and behavioral basis for audience roles. To evade the problem of mismatched observational and theoretical or ontological units (Fairhurst & Antonakis, 2012), the assessment tool should clearly ask about only the individual's own audience role. Third, individuals can adopt different roles in different leadership contexts (e.g., work, family). The assessment tool should clearly indicate (and emphasize) which leadership context the questions should be answered about. Finally, as discussed above, individuals might tend to perceive supporter roles in a more favorable light. The design and the wording of the assessment tool should take extra care to avoid the social desirability bias in participants especially if they are in opposer roles.

Conclusion

There is no leadership without an audience. Audience members are crucial in determining the direction of the leadership phenomenon as well as its performance. Indeed, audience members spend effort through supportive or oppositional behavior, demonstrating their conviction in their ability to shape the leadership phenomenon. As the mechanism through which audience members exert influence, audience roles can supplement and enhance the extant leadership literature by better specifying and unpacking the aggregated conceptualization of the ‘follower’ (Güntner et al., 2020; Lord et al., 2020).

In this chapter, I aimed to empirically demonstrate the existence of audience roles as prototypes of group members in leadership phenomenon. My mixed method study improves our understanding of ‘followership’ by providing empirical evidence for a wide range of supporter and opposer roles in a typical leadership setting. Furthermore, my results show that audience roles are not unidimensional constructs of behaviors, each role also has distinct attitudes and motivations. Accounting for attitudes in addition to behaviors enables audience roles to capture individuals’ internal states and strategic impression management tactics. Implementation of the audience role typology as an inclusive analytical and strategic tool can help us to have a clearer understanding of leadership phenomena, thereby improving group and individual goal fulfillment and well-being.

*Chapter 5***GENERAL DISCUSSION**

Despite the continued interest in leadership throughout the ages (e.g., Sun Tzu, approximately 5th century BC; Machiavelli, 1532), the focus of this captivation has been strikingly narrow (Collinson, 2018; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Indeed, for most of human history, ‘leadership’ is perceived to be synonymous with ‘leader’ and his/her attributes and behaviors, tying the outcomes of the leadership to the leader’s success or failure alone (e.g., Great Man theories; Carlyle, 1841). Even with the recent theoretical advances in followership, the literature is still mostly constrained by “a binary view of leadership in which either leaders have complete agency and followers none or else leaders have no agency and followers are completely autonomous” (Haslam et al., 2022, p. 2). Based on my review of the extant research in the field, I realized that there is no holistic theory that defines leadership as a collectively co-created phenomenon in which *all* group members (including the leader, followers, and non-followers) are agentic participants in both goal setting and group performance.

The absence of a holistic theory of leadership leads to several crucial gaps in the literature that motivated the research presented in this dissertation. First and foremost, there is no multi-level framework of leadership that explains how ‘leadership’ is created by all group members simultaneously at individual, sub-group, and group levels (Shamir, 2007).

Second, since the followers are usually portrayed as passive reflectors of the leaders' influence (Collinson, 2018; May et al., 2014), there is a tendency to construe group members as 'babbits' without agency, and therefore, exempt from the responsibility of leadership outcomes. Third, in line with the dominant approaches to leadership, existing follower typologies (e.g., Kelley, 1988; Thoroughgood et al., 2012) take the perspective of the leader and/or the organization and have no tolerance for dissent. Consequently, these follower typologies fail to capture the whole range of social roles individuals can adopt in a leadership phenomenon. Finally, with a notable exception of Carsten and colleagues' (2010) work on followership which provides empirical evidence for the existence of two types of follower schemas (i.e., passive and proactive), the existing follower typologies are based on theoretical reasoning and are not validated empirically. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 aimed to address these gaps. Together, this dissertation attempted to understand who the constituents of leadership really are and how leadership as a multilevel social phenomenon that is co-created by all group members actually works.

In this final chapter, I will first summarize the main findings of the previous chapters. Second, I will discuss the theoretical contributions and implications of the conclusions drawn from earlier chapters. Third, I will consider the strengths and limitations of the research presented in this dissertation and suggest future research avenues that are made available by it. Fourth, I will shortly discuss the practical implications of this dissertation. Finally, I will conclude with some recapitulating remarks.

Overview of the Research Program

By proposing a novel leadership framework that is both holistic and precise, this dissertation opened up new research avenues in a number of leadership areas, and therefore, initiated a research program above and beyond what is proposed here. In that sense, the research presented in this dissertation should be considered not as separate conceptual and empirical studies, but as a coordinated effort to shed light on a new approach to leadership as a whole. In Chapter 2, I introduced the participatory theater framework (PTF) where leadership is “a vehicle for social identity-based collective agency” (Reicher et al., 2005, p. 547) in which each member of the audience participates through their assumed roles. With this framework, I was able to propose a mechanism (i.e., audience roles) through which all group members (i.e., audience) co-create leadership simultaneously on multiple levels (i.e., individual, sub-group, and group). Focusing on the individuals’ own perceptions of their attitudes and behaviors towards the leader, the PTF does not evaluate different opinions and behaviors as beneficial or obstructing, but simply as co-creating forces. Consequently, the PTF’s audience role typology has a much wider scope of legitimate attitudes and behaviors towards the leader, both negative and positive, allowing the construction of nuanced roles in a wide spectrum (i.e., devoted followers, vigilant followers, covert followers, pragmatists, survivors, dissenters, rebels, and apathetics). Furthermore, operating on multiple levels (i.e., individual, sub-group, and group) simultaneously, the PTF suggests that these audience roles coalesce into sub-groups of like-minded individuals (i.e., role groups), producing a topology of the networks of connections within and between sub-groups. Audience topology, mapped on the dimensions of audience roles (i.e., attitudes and

behaviors), provides leadership researchers a novel and efficacious way of examining and classifying (i.e., divided, neutral, leader-favoring majority, leader-favoring minority) audiences of leadership phenomena.

The main aim of Chapter 3 was to investigate whether individuals do have agency in leadership context as suggested by the PTF or not. Individuals' agency is defined as "the capacity and intention to control their own behavior and outcomes by assessing the situation and determining how best to reach their goals while remaining faithful to their beliefs and dispositions" (Swann & Jetten, 2017, p. 382) and it is a fundamental requirement for the PTF's proposed leadership co-creation mechanism (i.e., audience roles) to work. To that end, I conducted a narrative review to verify the significance of the decision making and cognitive processes of an audience role that is frequently thought as passive and lacking initiative in a particularly agency-suppressing leadership context (Thoroughgood et al., 2016), namely the devoted followers of toxic leaders. In this narrative review, I brought together diverse literatures that have not been considered together before, including the literature on toxic leaders, Bourdieusian *illusio*, followership, personal uncertainty, and ethical and moral decision making from disciplines of management, organizational and cognitive psychology, and organizational sociology. Based on this review, I was able to conceptually demonstrate that devoted followers join and remain in the toxic *illusio* for their personal benefit and their participation collectively shapes and sustains the toxic leadership phenomenon.

In Chapter 4, I explored whether audience roles exist as prototypes in the minds of respondents and whether these roles are constructed as attitudes and behaviors towards the leader as the PTF suggests. By presenting evidence for the existence of polyphonic audience roles and their associated prototypes, the mixed methods study presented in this chapter (i) provided support for the audience typology suggested by the PTF and (ii) addressed the call for empirical research on the nature of ‘followership’ (Blom & Lundgren, 2020; Collinson, 2018). Accordingly, first I asked participants to describe different group members in a typical social group, specifically in terms of their relationship with or reaction to the leader. Then, I had two independent and conceptually blind coders to quantify the information provided in those descriptions. Finally, I ran several latent class analyses to discover and interpret the audience roles from the data. The results of the latent class analyses provided strong evidence for the existence of meaningful audience role prototypes up to eight latent classes (i.e., devoted follower, pragmatic follower, conditional follower, work-focused follower, benign apathetic, harmful apathetic, dissenter, revolutionary), each with a distinct set of behaviors, attitudes, and motivations, confirming the PTF’s propositions. Furthermore, these audience roles nest within superordinate roles and they remain robust across degrees of aggregation as PTF suggested.

Theoretical Contributions and Implications

The overarching goal of this dissertation was to contribute to the leadership literature by suggesting a more holistic yet a more precise understanding of leadership as a social phenomenon. Accordingly, each chapter in this dissertation informed this new

understanding of leadership through a different angle. I will now discuss the theoretical contributions and implications of the overall research program initiated in this dissertation.

Established in Chapter 2, the participatory theater framework contributed to the leadership research by introducing five organizing components to the literature: (i) the audience as the complete set of agents; (ii) attitudinal and behavioral alignment dimensions on which audience members differentiate, (iii) audience roles as commonly recognizable social types (e.g., Klapp, 1954) each characterized by a particular pair of attitudinal and behavioral alignment levels towards the leader; (iv) audience role groups as clusters of individuals enacting similar roles; and (v) audience topology as the map of the social networks within and between audience role groups.

Supported by the theoretical and empirical findings reported in Chapters 3 and 4, the PTF as a holistic and precise framework has a number of significant implications for the leadership literature. First, this dissertation contributed to the literature by demonstrating that opposing or silent audience members are co-producers of the leadership phenomenon, not obstacles to be overcome, transformed, or expelled (Ford & Harding, 2018).

Considering every audience member (regardless of their support, opposition, and even apathy) as a legitimate co-creator of the leadership phenomenon absolves us from over-aggregation caused by clumping audience members with different roles under the category of ‘followers’ (Güntner et al., 2020; Lord et al., 2020). More specifically, leadership determinants such as leaders’ traits and styles have divergent effects on individuals with

different characteristics (e.g., Jordan et al., 2011; Weierner, 1997; see also Bligh et al., 2011). For instance, transformational leadership is generally assumed to have a consistently positive effect on followers, yet it is not always necessarily so (e.g., den Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Kensbock & Stöckmann, 2019). Audience roles, as an empirically tested typology, provides a simple yet effective tool for leadership research and practice to distinguish how a construct of interest moderates or mediates leadership outcomes differently for individuals with different attitudes and behaviors towards the leader. Going back to the example above, transformational leadership is built on inspiring and motivating the followers which requires them to believe in the vision the leader put forward (Burns, 1978). However, it is possible that some audience members such as rebels, dissenters, survivors, and even pragmatic followers and apathetics may not buy into that vision and may resent further attempts for assimilation. Therefore, techniques such as idealized influence and inspirational motivation that makes transformational leadership ‘transformational’ for followers may backfire when applied indiscriminately to every audience member. Furthermore, the optimal strategy for the leader or the organization to co-opt ‘non-believers’ may also significantly differ among audience roles. Therefore, the widespread practice of measuring individual-level variables of interest (e.g., employee satisfaction and commitment, turnover intention) and then aggregating these to find an average of leader effectiveness is inadequate to address the complex nature of leader - audience member dynamic. Audience role typology, on the other hand, enables a nuanced treatment of the leadership phenomena by differentiating the attitudes, behaviors, motivations, and evaluations of individuals who adopted different audience roles, and

therefore, facilitates the development of a more accurate understanding of the constituents of leadership and enables targeted interventions to improve group cohesiveness and effectiveness.

Second, this dissertation contributed to the followership research by introducing a new level of analysis (i.e., audience topology). Note that leadership consists of a polyphony of different individual agencies, accounting for the influence of different visions, values, and interests of the group members as well as the coordinated and synergistic aspects of the group. Consequently, the audience topology, as a quantifiable map of individual and sub-group level social dynamics within the audience, can be a powerful tool to understand how cooperating and clashing individuals and sub-groups shape leadership together, including both the processes for setting the group goals and the group's effectiveness in reaching those goals. Indeed, the audience topology can contribute to not only the leader effectiveness research (e.g., how effective transformational leadership is in leader-favoring minority audiences) but also to the leader emergence research (e.g., do divided audience favor authoritarian leader candidates).

Third, in addition to demonstrating that audience members do have agency even when they are least expected to, this dissertation also contributed to the toxic leadership literature by describing the crucial cognitive and social psychological mechanisms that sustain toxic leadership phenomena. More specifically, I argued that the toxic *illusio* draws devoted followers into the game and entices them to stay, because the toxic *illusio* itself performs a

critical function and fulfills a strong need for the individual to have certainty in their life. Destructive leaders ‘generate a serious and enduring poisonous effect on the individuals, families, organizations, communities, and even entire societies they lead’ (Lipman-Blumen, 2005c, p. 29) and the support of their followers sustains the toxic leaderships (Thoroughgood et al., 2016). Therefore, understanding motivations, decision making processes, and biases of devoted followers of toxic leaders is pivotal for untangling the determinants that sustain toxic leadership and curbing its future occurrences.

Finally, this dissertation contributed to the leadership literature methodologically by utilizing latent class analysis to discover the unobserved audience roles in the data. Latent class analysis (finite mixture models) is a relatively familiar statistical procedure ‘used to identify qualitatively different subgroups within populations who often share certain outward characteristics’ (Weller et al., 2020) in other research domains (e.g., psychology; Nylund-Gibson & Choi, 2018). Yet, as far as I know, it has not been practiced in leadership research except Coyle and Foti’s (2021) recent work on implicit followership theories and work-related affect using latent profile analysis. In that sense, Chapter 4 is also an application case of a helpful statistical tool that can be very effective in identifying hidden groups in the data (Vermunt & Magidson, 2004), especially for a phenomenon like leadership.

Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research Directions

The research presented in this dissertation has a few strengths that are worth mentioning.

For example, in addition to the above-mentioned theoretical contributions to the leadership literature, each chapter of this dissertation took advantage of a different research methodology to address a gap in the literature. Chapter 2 distilled a novel leadership framework by integrating and building on the most recent advances in leadership and followership literatures. Chapter 3 utilized a vigorous narrative review of a diverse range of literatures to combine existing research and improve our knowledge on devoted followers in toxic leaderships. Chapter 4 presented a mixed method study that employed a more sophisticated and adequate statistical analysis than those widely used in the leadership literature.

Notwithstanding the contributions, like all research, the present dissertation has a number of limitations. The first and the most evident limitation of the participatory theater framework is that the audience role typology and audience topology has not been empirically analyzed in the context of a real-life leadership phenomenon. Observing how audience roles are positioned on attitudinal and behavioral alignment dimensions in several different leadership situations (e.g., group formation, authoritarian leaders) is crucial for our understanding of how this complex, dynamic, and multilevel phenomenon works. Naturally, a first step of such an endeavor is developing and validating an assessment tool of audience role. Once a short and practical assessment tool is ready featuring the audience role dimensions of attitudes and behaviors towards the leader, it can be included in all sorts of leadership and followership research to represent a more nuanced depiction of the phenomenon under study.

Another significant limitation of the PTF as presented in this dissertation was the limited discussion of external factors. Leadership is not merely the collective agency of the group but can be affected by external stakeholders and environmental factors, or social dimensions defining the group, including power and social structures of governance. For example, audience members may influence leadership processes and outcomes more effectively in democratic than in hierarchical and autocratic societies and groups. Although audience members survey their situation and determine a course of action, whether it be silence, support, or resistance, and thereby adopt what they feel to be an optimal role under any conditions, it is of utmost importance to understand how context shapes their decision-making processes.

Another limitation of the research presented in this dissertation was the sample used in Chapter 4. In the study, I used a convenience sample of undergraduate students from Schulich School of Business, York University. With an average age of 18.84 (s.d. 0.54 years) and a common lack of work experience, one of the key limitations of my study was the inexperience of my sample in various adult leadership contexts such as work to draw their descriptions from. Considering that people might have significantly different sets of audience role prototypes in different stages of their lives, repeating this study with different samples can help researchers and practitioners to better understand inter-generational conflict as well as to develop age and life-stage targeted audience interventions.

Last but not least, this dissertation is limited in terms of providing an in-depth

understanding of each audience role in different leadership settings. More specifically, the intricate cognitive and social psychological mechanisms that were shown in Chapter 3 to come into play when the devoted followers decide to join and remain in the toxic leadership exhibit the need to understand more about each role in different contexts. Yet, in this dissertation I could only investigate the motivations and decision-making processes of one audience role in a specific leadership context (i.e., devoted followers of toxic leaders). Furthermore, I only demonstrated the decision-making mechanisms conceptually, through a narrative review. As such, seconding the call for empirical research on the nature of ‘followership’ (Blom & Lundgren, 2020; Collinson, 2018), I invite leadership and followership scholars to conduct in-depth examinations of the cognitive and social psychological processes of audience roles in different leadership scenarios, both conceptually and empirically.

Practical Implications

Leadership is a focal social phenomenon for our societies in every domain of life and leadership research has a direct and reciprocal relationship with the practice of leadership (Simpson et al., 2017). Consequently, leadership researchers have a responsibility to consider the performative effect of their framing of the phenomenon on leadership practice in the real world (Alvesson & Spicer, 2012). Considering the leader and his/her ‘good followers’ focus of the majority of extant research in the field, this dissertation can shift the lens of both theory and practice to include previously cast-aside members of the groups. More specifically, I hope that the PTF’s axioms of inclusivity and co-creation can help the

ongoing transformation of leadership practice. Similar to the performative effects of atypical leaders in organizations (Samdanis & Özbilgin, 2020), legitimization and acknowledgement of ‘atypical followers’ (i.e., opposing or silent audience members) can offer a new path for diversity by introducing more ways to be productive organizational stakeholders. For instance, the PTF can help organizations to concede that some audience members may have legitimate objections to leaders (e.g., racial or sexual identity-based discrimination, mobbing) that cannot be resolved by tweaking this or that leadership style but has to be addressed openly and decisively.

Another aspect the PTF can contribute to the leadership practice is the development of audience-targeted interventions based on the audience topology of the particular leadership phenomenon. While studies like the one I presented in Chapter 3 can help us understand the antecedents of audience role adoption and sustained enactment, future research on the audience role assessment tool and the audience topology can help practitioners better assess the leadership situation they face. This knowledge, then, can be used for developing audience targeting interventions to increase cohesiveness within the audience, as well as to improve group effectiveness. Similarly, leader training programs can be improved by replacing ‘one-size-fits-all’ leadership advice with refined strategies developed based on the attitudes, behaviors, and motivations of each audience role.

Concluding Remarks

My main motivation for writing this dissertation was the lack of an accurate representation

of the people I knew in real life in the leadership literature. The ‘follower’ described by the millennia-spanning corpus on leadership was too leader and/or organization oriented to acknowledge dissenters as anything other than malevolent or sluggish. Adopting a constructionist approach to leadership (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014), I aimed to propose a leadership framework that recognizes every group member as a legitimate agent that perpetually co-create the leadership phenomenon. In three chapters, I introduced the participatory theater framework of leadership, demonstrated that audience members are indeed agents, and provided empirical proof that the typology of audience roles that the PTF suggested exists. I hope that leadership scholars, particularly those devoted to the study of followership, will find the research presented in this dissertation beneficial and get inspired to pursue future research on the topic.

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