

# Testing Behling and McFillen's Syncretical Model of Charismatic Transformational Leadership

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This study examines charismatic transformational leadership behaviors, follower beliefs, and organizational commitment. It tests the mediational relationships hypothesized by Behling and McFillen's Syncretical Model of Charismatic Transformational Leadership. Self-report questionnaires were completed by 178 followers, relating to 29 leaders in 17 organizations. Mediational analyses found that the follower beliefs of awe and inspiration mediated the effect of charismatic transformational leader behaviors on commitment, although not in the pattern predicted by Behling and McFillen. A structural equation model suggested that awe and inspiration, but not empowerment, mediated the effect of leader behaviors on commitment, with leader behaviors being most strongly related to the follower belief of awe, and commitment being most strongly related to the follower belief of inspiration.

**Keywords:** commitment; charismatic; transformational; leadership

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Allen and Meyer's (1990) concept of organizational commitment has been the subject of extensive research in the past two decades (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Meyer, Stanley, Herscovitch, & Topolnytsky, 2002). Numerous studies have focused on the nature, antecedents, and consequences of organizational commitment and on individuals' work attitudes and behaviors that are characteristic of organizational commitment. Some studies have examined the empirical relationship between organizational commitment and charismatic and transformational leadership behaviors (Bycio, Hackett, & Allen, 1995; Niehoff, Enz, & Grover, 1990; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, & Bommer, 1996). However, few empirical studies have investigated the mediational role played by follower beliefs and perceptions of charismatic and transformational leaders. Such is the aim of this study.

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Organizational commitment has been defined as the psychological tie between the organization and the employee, which increases the chance that the employee will remain with the organization and contribute above-average effort to the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1996; Meyer et al., 2002). Previous research has predominantly focused on the limited and static relationships between leadership behavior and follower organizational commitment (Allen & Meyer, 1996). For example, Bycio et al. (1995) found a correlation between charismatic transformational leadership behavior and follower organizational commitment. Niehoff et al. (1990), in their study of transformational leadership and organizational commitment, admitted that a limitation was that

their study focused on static relationships which do not capture the true dynamism and complexity of the relationship between top-management actions and employee attitudes. . . . Future research should focus on testing the mediating effect of the employee attitudes and perceptions in the link between top-management actions and organizational "excellence." (p. 349)

Similarly, Shamir, House, and Arthur (1993) proposed that transformational leader behavior influences follower behavior via mediational follower self-concepts and beliefs.

There appears to be growing recognition of the need to further explore the role of charismatic transformational leadership, organizational commitment, and mediating follower beliefs. An article by Beyer (1999) arguing along these lines led to prompt responses by the field's respected analysts, Bass (1999), House (1999), and Shamir (1999). Shamir said, "We need a model of leadership that can explain how leaders . . . increase participants' internal commitment" (p. 560). Bass and House stated that there is a need for more dynamic research into the effects of charismatic transformational leadership on subordinates' attitudes and subsequent behavior.

This study fulfills this need by examining the "generative mechanism" (Baron & Kenny, 1986, p. 1173) of a follower's beliefs through which charismatic transformational leadership behavior influences a follower's organizational commitment.

### ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Over the past decade, organizational commitment has emerged as a central concept in the study of work attitudes and behavior, owing to the demonstrated links with turnover intention, actual turnover, and other forms of

work and non-work behavior (Allen & Meyer, 1996). The value of the concept of organizational commitment in the study of work attitudes and behavior is reflected in the quantity, diversity, and findings of various studies.

Allen and Meyer (1990) argue that the three types of commitment—*affective*, *continuance*, and *normative*—are probably measuring emotional attachment, perceived costs, and obligation to the organization, respectively, as distinct types of organizational commitment. An employee, to differing degrees, may experience each of these three types. For example, a nurse may feel both a strong obligation (*normative commitment*) and a strong need (*continuance commitment*) while working in a nursing home in a small country town where there are limited nursing alternatives, but no desire (*affective commitment*) when working for an unsympathetic director of care.

Research shows that *affective commitment* is correlated with desirable work characteristics, attitudes and behaviors such as job satisfaction, competence, loyalty and job performance, much more so than *continuance commitment* or *normative commitment*. For example, Meyer, Paunonen, Gellatly, Goffin, and Jackson (1989) found that supervisors' ratings of the overall job performance and promotability of their staff correlated positively with their *affective commitment* scores and negatively with their *continuance commitment* scores. Allen and Meyer (1996) report extensive evidence linking commitment and, in particular, *affective commitment* much more so than *normative* and *continuance commitment*, with a wide range of attitudinal and objective work-related measures (e.g., from a range of studies from 1986 to 1995, *affective commitment* correlated  $-.33$  to  $-.61$  with turnover intentions,  $-.19$  to  $-.26$  with turnover behavior,  $.07$  to  $.46$  with self-report measures of performance, and  $.00$  to  $.31$  with independent measures of performance).

Commitment is one of the attributes of follower responses referred to in Behling and McFillen's Syncretical Model of Charismatic Transformational Leadership discussed below.

### CHARISMATIC TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP THEORIES

Over the past two decades, there has been extensive research into a collection of similar leadership theories variously referred to as *charismatic*, *transformational*, or *visionary leadership* (Bass, 1985, 1998, 1999; Behling & McFillen, 1996; Conger & Kanungo, 1987; House & Aditya, 1997; Kets de Vries, 1994; Klein & House, 1998; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; Shamir et al., 1993; Tichy & Devanna, 1986; Yukl, 2002; Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992). These theories focus on exceptional leaders who have extraordinary effects on their

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followers. According to these theories, such leaders transform the needs, values, preferences, and aspirations of followers from self-interest to team interest. Further, these leaders cause followers to become highly committed to both the leader's and organization's mission and to perform above and beyond the call of duty.

The leader behavior specified by these theories is different from the transactional behavior emphasized in earlier theories of organizational leadership. The earlier transactional theories describe leader behavior in terms of leader/follower exchange relationships, providing direction, support, and reinforcement behaviors (Langford & Fitness, 2003). In contrast, the new theories emphasize "symbolic leader behavior" (Shamir et al., 1993, p. 578), via visionary and inspirational messages, appeals to higher values, intellectual stimulation of followers by the leader, displays of confidence in leader and followers, and exceptional follower commitment and performance (Bass, 1985, 1998; Behling & McFillen, 1996; Conger & Kanungo, 1987; Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992). According to Shamir et al. (1993), this style of leadership "is seen as giving meaningfulness to work by infusing work and organizations with moral purpose and commitment rather than by affecting the task environment of followers or by offering material incentives and the threat of punishment" (p. 578). In essence, charismatic transformational leadership theories differ from earlier leadership theories because the charismatic transformational theories focus on values and emotions (Yukl, 1999).

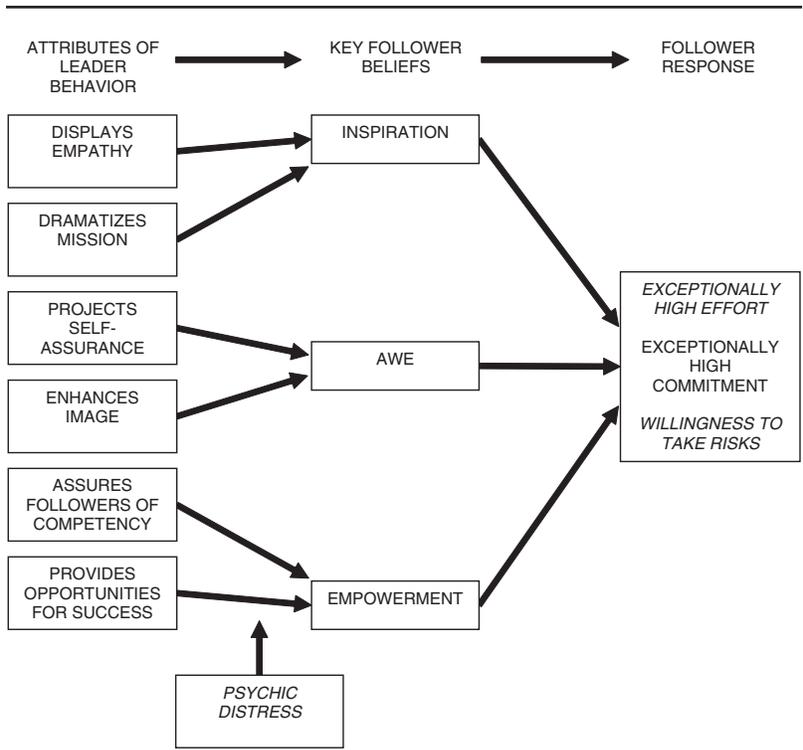
Although the above brief overview places charismatic and transformational theories into a single category of leadership theories, it is important to acknowledge some theoretical differences. As discussed in the review by Langford and Fitness (2003), the charismatic theories were chronologically earlier and tended to focus on leaders' need for power and impression management. Some of the early charismatic theories have been criticized for ignoring the dangers of "negative charismatics," including the pursuit of grandiose projects aimed solely at glorifying the leader, the desire for personal visibility and adulation to the exclusion of appropriate implementation of their projects, and their frequent inability to develop successors (Collins, 2001; Conger, 1989; Musser, 1987). Theories of transformational leadership were developed to overcome this criticism by focusing specifically on leader behaviors that were deemed to be more socially acceptable and produced socially desirable outcomes (e.g., Bass, 1985; Podsakoff et al., 1996).

Nevertheless, despite the subtle theoretical differences, there is considerable convergence of the findings from studies concerned with charismatic, transformational, and visionary leadership (Shamir et al., 1993). Collectively, these findings indicate that leaders who engage in these behaviors

receive higher performance ratings, have more satisfied and more highly motivated followers, and are regarded as more effective leaders by their superiors and followers than colleagues engaged in other styles of leadership (Shamir et al., 1993). This study examines Behling and McFillen's (1996) attempt to combine and reconcile the various charismatic and transformational leadership theories into a single model.

### THE SYNCRETICAL MODEL OF CHARISMATIC TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

To assist in the study of charismatic transformational leadership and its effect on followers' beliefs and behavior, Behling and McFillen (1996) developed the Syncretical Model of Charismatic Transformational Leadership. Behling and McFillen argued that although multiple competing models of charismatic, transformational, and visionary leadership had progressed thinking and practice, both researchers and practitioners experience difficulties in achieving further progress because of the absence of an integrated, generally accepted model of leadership. Behling and McFillen attempted to reconcile and integrate differences among existing theories of charismatic, transformational, and visionary leadership, to operationalize key constructs, and to provide a testable set of hypotheses concerning the relationships between those constructs. The resulting model (see Figure 1) contains three different sets of variables: leader behaviors, follower beliefs, and follower responses. As shown in Figure 1, Behling and McFillen's original model proposed that "psychic distress" of followers would interact with leader behaviors to produce follower beliefs, although they did not attempt to operationalize psychic distress or empirically examine its relationship with other constructs in their model. Behling and McFillen also suggested that beyond organizational commitment, other examples of follower responses would be exceptionally high work effort and a willingness to take risks. For the purposes of this study, however, we have focused on what we believe to be the core of their model: leader behaviors, follower beliefs, and the outcome of follower commitment; that is, we have removed "psychic distress," "exceptionally high effort," and "willingness to take risks" (all italicized in Figure 1) from the model we test in this article. It is worthwhile noting, however, that Allen and Meyer (1996) originally defined organizational commitment as a psychological tie between an individual and an organization that resulted in above-average effort of the employee, and as discussed above, empirical research has demonstrated the link between organizational commitment and high levels of work effort in the form of less withdrawal



**Figure 1: The Syncretical Model of Charismatic Transformational Leadership**  
 SOURCE: Behling and McFillen (1996, p. 166).

behavior and higher ratings of performance. Hence, the exceptionally high effort component of Behling and McFillen’s model is, at least in part, being represented in this article.

The leader behaviors and follower beliefs included in the model were chosen by Behling and McFillen to represent a wide range of charismatic and transformational leadership theories such as Bass (1985), Conger and Kanungo (1987), Tichy and Devanna (1986), and others (Behling & McFillen, 1996, p. 164). The model’s variables (with the exception of commitment, which has been defined earlier) are defined as follows.

**ATTRIBUTES OF LEADER BEHAVIOR**

“Displays empathy” refers to leader behavior that demonstrates an understanding of followers’ values, needs, and wants and attempts to structure

goals around those values. An example item from Behling and McFillen is, "The leader appeals to the values of followers in communicating his/her goals." Behling and McFillen found a correlation of .70 between their measure of "displays empathy" and a previous measure of "consideration" (regard for the comfort, well-being, and contribution of his or her followers; Cook, Hepworth, Wall, & Warr, 1989).

"Dramatizes the mission" refers to leader behavior that uses metaphors, similes, analogies, and allusions to organizational or cultural values and symbols to convey the mission and its importance. The leader communicates the importance of the mission through actions as well as words. An example item from Behling and McFillen is, "The leader makes the mission of the organization/unit seem important." Behling and McFillen reported being unable to find an equivalent existing measure against which their measure of "dramatizes mission" could be compared.

"Projects self-assurance" refers to a leader acting confidently and with certainty. An example item from Behling and McFillen is, "Sometimes the leader appears unsure of him/herself" (reverse-scored). Behling and McFillen found a correlation of .50 between their measure of "projects self-assurance" and a previous measure of "individual prominence" (one who assumes leadership when necessary, develops initiatives, is willing to take risks, and has a prominent personality that pushes through; Mulder, Ritsema van Eck, & De Jong, 1971).

"Enhances image" refers to leader behavior that creates the impression of the leader's competence, success, and being totally committed to the mission. An example item from Behling and McFillen is, "The leader shows off his/her strong abilities." Behling and McFillen found a correlation of .53 between their measure of "enhances image" and a previous measure of "recognition orientation" (leader's directedness toward attaining positive recognition; Mulder et al., 1971).

"Assures followers of competency" refers to leader behavior that conveys the idea that followers can perform at high levels, overcome obstacles, and control conditions and events around them. An example item from Behling and McFillen is, "The leader tells followers that he/she believes in them." Behling and McFillen found a correlation of .68 between their measure of "assures followers of competency" and a previous measure of "positive reward behavior" (Sims & Szilagyi, 1975).

Finally, "provides opportunities for success" refers to leader behavior that delegates responsibility for challenging tasks and works to remove obstacles to subordinate performance. An example item from Behling and McFillen is, "The leader gives followers opportunities to accomplish things on their own." Behling and McFillen found a correlation of .71 between their

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measure of “provides opportunities for success” and a previous measure of “supervisor support and participation” (Lee, Bobko, Earley, & Locke, 1991).

### KEY FOLLOWER BELIEFS

“Inspiration” refers to followers’ belief that the organization’s or unit’s activities have a transcendent moral or ethical purpose. An example item from Behling and McFillen is, “The work I do serves a good cause.” Behling and McFillen found a correlation of .63 between their measure of “inspiration” and a previous measure of “experienced meaningfulness of work” (Hackman & Oldham, 1980).

“Awe” refers to followers having faith in the abilities of the leader that is often accompanied by affection for the leader. An example item from Behling and McFillen is, “I trust the leader’s decisions.” Behling and McFillen found a correlation of .88 between their measure of “awe” and a previous measure of “referent power” (Podsakoff & Schriesheim, 1985).

Finally, “empowerment” refers to followers’ belief in their own ability and their capacity to overcome obstacles and control events. An example item from Behling and McFillen is, “I can handle unfamiliar situations on the job.” Behling and McFillen found a correlation of .66 between their measure of “empowerment” and a previous measure of “self-efficacy” (Sherer et al., 1982).

The psychometric properties of the instruments developed by Behling and McFillen (1996) to measure leader behaviors and follower beliefs were assessed in their study and are discussed below. However, the model’s underlying assumption that attributes of leader behavior lead to certain key follower beliefs, which in turn result in certain follower responses, was not examined. Although Behling and McFillen (1996) did not test their model, they did say that “the provision of empirical evidence, indicating that the key follower beliefs are in fact reflected in follower effort [and] commitment . . . would provide an important step in demonstrating the actual impact of charismatic transformational leadership on employee behavior and performance” (p. 185). Such a goal is the central purpose of this article.

According to Shamir, Zakay, Breinin, and Popper (1998), there is a need for research where multiple psychological states are measured, and the distinction between leader behavior and follower beliefs is not blurred. The Syncretical Model of Charismatic Transformational Leadership was used in this study to focus on the effects that distinct leader behaviors have on discrete follower beliefs. With regard to the attributes of follower response included in the Syncretical Model, this article uses Allen and Meyer’s (1990)

measure of organizational commitment to represent the follower response Behling and McFillen described as high commitment.

### FOLLOWER BELIEFS AS MEDIATING VARIABLES

In mediation, the independent variables of interest influence the dependent variables through mediating variables (Baron & Kenny, 1986). Operationalizing Behling and McFillen's model in this study involves the six independent variables representing the attributes of leader behavior shown in Figure 1, the dependent variable of commitment, and the three mediating variables representing the follower beliefs of awe, inspiration, and empowerment. As previously discussed, research clearly indicates that charismatic transformational leadership behaviors are positively correlated with organizational commitment (Bycio et al., 1995; Niehoff et al., 1990; Podsakoff et al., 1996). This study expands on this previous research to investigate the potential mediating role of follower beliefs of awe, inspiration, and empowerment.

Specifically, in the Syncretical Model of Charismatic Transformational Leadership, Behling and McFillen suggest a highly defined mediation process. The hypotheses in this article follow from the model and rationale presented in Behling and McFillen (1996).

First, Behling and McFillen hypothesized that inspiration (belief that the organization's or unit's activities have a transcendent moral or ethical purpose) flows from leader behavior that displays empathy (appeals to followers' values and fits goals around those values) and dramatizes the mission (emphasizes the importance of the mission and acts enthusiastically in pursuit of the mission). In turn, followers' belief in a transcendent moral or ethical purpose will result in greater belief in the importance of the purpose and goals of an organization and thus lead to greater commitment. Hence,

*Hypothesis 1:* Inspiration will mediate the relationship between the leader behaviors "displays empathy" and "dramatizes the mission," and the dependent variable of organizational commitment.

Second, Behling and McFillen hypothesized that awe (trusting and admiring a leader) flows from leader behavior that projects self-assurance (shows confidence and certainty) and enhances the leader's image (demonstrates strong talent and impresses followers). In turn, followers' trust and admiration of a leader will strengthen followers' belief that the purpose and goals of an organization can be achieved and thus lead to greater commitment. Hence,

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*Hypothesis 2:* Awe will mediate the relationship between the leader behaviors “projects self-assurance” and “enhances image,” and the dependent variable of organizational commitment.

Finally, Behling and McFillen hypothesized that followers’ sense of empowerment (belief in their own abilities and capacity to handle problems and unfamiliar situations) flows from leader behavior that assures followers of competency (praises good performance and expresses belief in followers’ abilities) and provides opportunities for success (sets challenging but achievable goals). In turn, followers’ belief in their own abilities will strengthen their sense that they can contribute to the purpose and goals of an organization and thus lead to greater commitment. Hence,

*Hypothesis 3:* Empowerment will mediate the relationship between the leader behaviors “assures followers of competency” and “provides opportunities for success,” and the dependent variable of organizational commitment.

## METHOD

### PARTICIPANTS

The participants for this study were staff from 17 profit and nonprofit institutions, covering industries such as banking, engineering, hospitality, consulting, and aged care. The sample included 178 subordinates of 29 managers. The manager-subordinate teams ranged in size from 1 to 14 individuals, covering supervisory and executive levels of leadership. The mean age of participants was 38.02 years ( $SD = 11.32$ , range = 17-67). There were 104 females and 73 males (one participant did not report gender).

Given that the study is examining subordinate perceptions of, and reactions to, leader behavior, the unit of analysis used in this study was the subordinate. Overall, the sample size of 178 subordinates used in this study is consistent with sample sizes in other studies (see the meta-analysis of leadership research conducted by Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996).

It is important to highlight that this study used data for leader behaviors, follower beliefs, and follower responses all collected from subordinates. This approach is consistent with all the scale and model development in Behling and McFillen’s original article. Nevertheless, results from same source data need to be interpreted with some caution. To overcome some of the criticisms of same source data, the analyses below include additional validity checks to ensure that all measured scales are independent (a factor analysis is conducted to show that all scales for leader behaviors, follower

beliefs, and commitment are independent) and that the causal direction shown in Figure 1 is supported (mediations are tested with leader behaviors as independent variables and follower beliefs as mediators and are shown to be much stronger than mediation effects using follower beliefs as independent variables and leader behaviors as mediators).

## MEASURES

Attributes of leader behavior and key follower beliefs were measured using the two Behling and McFillen (1996) measures: the Leader Behavior Scale and the Follower Belief Scale.

*Leader Behavior Scale.* Behling and McFillen constructed the Leader Behavior Scale (LBS) to measure the six attributes of leader behavior in their model. The scale includes 18 items: three items for each of the six leader behaviors. Three internal consistency tests for the six subscales were conducted by Behling and McFillen and resulted in satisfactory Cronbach's alphas all higher than .70. Similarly satisfactory alpha coefficients were found in this study: displays empathy, .68; dramatizes mission, .71; projects self-assurance, .78; enhances image, .73; assures followers of competency, .85; and provides opportunities for success, .82.

Behling and McFillen did not provide details about a factor analysis on their scale, but a factor analysis in this study, using principal axis factoring and direct oblimin rotation requesting six factors, produced the factor loadings shown in Table 1 accounting for 73% of the variance in the data (as discussed by Fabrigar, Wegener, MacCallum, & Strahan, 1999, an oblique rotation such as direct oblimin is superior to the more common varimax rotation when the factors are expected to correlate with each other). The underlined loadings in Table 1 show Behling and McFillen's allocation of items to scales (e.g., the first three items in Table 1 are part of the "displays empathy" scale). As can be seen from Table 1, 17 of the 18 items loaded highest on the factors on which they were expected to load. The exception was the item, "The leader tries to understand followers' values," which loaded highest on the "assures followers of competency" factor, rather than the expected "displays empathy" factor. Given the strong support for the hypothesized factor structure, and the satisfactory alpha coefficients for each scale, it was decided that in this study, all 18 items would be used in the manner originally proposed by Behling and McFillen. All were scored on Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*).

TABLE 1  
Rotated Factor Loadings for the Leader Behavior Scale

	<i>Displays Empathy</i>	<i>Dramatizes Mission</i>	<i>Projects Self-Assurance</i>	<i>Enhances Image</i>	<i>Assures Followers of Competency</i>	<i>Provides Opportunities for Success</i>
The leader fits his or her goals to followers' values	<b>.62</b>	-.05	.01	-.01	.06	.05
The leader appeals to the values of followers in communicating his or her goals	<b>.61</b>	.21	-.01	.00	.07	.11
The leader tries to understand followers' values	<b>.16</b>	.13	-.09	-.04	.49	.28
The leader does not announce the mission in an inspiring fashion (reverse-scored)	-.12	<b>.54</b>	.24	.01	.11	.06
The leader presents the mission of the organization enthusiastically	.10	<b>.52</b>	-.01	-.03	.21	.00
The leader makes the mission of the organization/unit seem important	.20	<b>.42</b>	.08	.14	.06	.19
Sometimes the leader shows a lack of confidence (reverse-scored)	-.07	-.02	<b>.80</b>	-.04	.09	.03
Sometimes the leader appears unsure of himself or herself (reverse-scored)	.06	.05	<b>.79</b>	.02	.03	.09
The leader rarely shows uncertainty	.27	.30	<b>.33</b>	.18	-.04	.01
The leader shows off his or her strong abilities	.01	-.02	.12	<b>.79</b>	-.09	.04
The leader acts in ways that show off his or her talents	-.22	.18	-.09	<b>.74</b>	.09	.09
The leader acts in ways designed to impress followers	.29	-.18	-.04	<b>.59</b>	.09	-.11
The leader praises followers for good performance	.02	-.04	.12	-.02	<b>.90</b>	-.01
The leader compliments followers who do good jobs	.01	.03	.20	.02	<b>.74</b>	.02
The leader tells followers that he or she believes in them	.03	.14	-.12	.07	<b>.57</b>	.09
The leader gives followers opportunities to accomplish things on their own	.03	.02	-.02	-.03	-.08	<b>.84</b>
The leader creates opportunities for followers to experience success	-.06	-.13	.08	.10	.16	<b>.81</b>
The leader helps followers set attainable goals	.13	.04	.09	-.02	.10	<b>.54</b>

NOTE: Bold figures show the intended allocation of items to scales.

TABLE 2  
Rotated Factor Loadings for the Follower Belief Scale

	<i>Inspiration</i>	<i>Awe</i>	<i>Empowerment</i>
The work that I do serves a good cause	<b>-.86</b>	-.05	.08
The work of my organization/unit benefits society	<b>-.78</b>	-.06	-.10
I believe in the work my organization/unit does	<b>-.69</b>	.13	.02
I feel that I am working for a cause that is greater than just earning a living	<b>-.69</b>	.02	.04
My work does not serve a good cause (reverse-scored)	<b>-.68</b>	.04	.03
I have faith in the leader	-.04	<b>.92</b>	-.06
I trust the leader's decision	.11	<b>.86</b>	.03
I admire the leader	-.09	<b>.78</b>	-.02
I have faith in the leader even when things go wrong	-.01	<b>.76</b>	.07
It would be hard to find someone who could lead this organization/unit better than the leader	-.03	<b>.70</b>	-.01
I am confident in my ability to overcome obstacles on the job	-.08	.04	<b>.78</b>
I can handle unfamiliar situations on the job	.09	.11	<b>.72</b>
I trust my ability to make decisions on the job	-.05	-.12	<b>.69</b>
I can handle new and unusual tasks	-.03	.07	<b>.66</b>
I am sure I can handle problems on the job	.02	-.04	<b>.64</b>

NOTE: Bold figures show the intended allocation of items to scales.

*Follower Belief Scale.* Behling and McFillen constructed the Follower Belief Scale (FBS) to measure the three follower beliefs of awe, inspiration, and empowerment in their model. The scale includes 15 items: five for each of the three follower beliefs. Studies of reliability and validity reported by Behling and McFillen showed that the follower belief subscales have good reliability and validity. Four independent tests of internal consistencies by Behling and McFillen resulted in Cronbach alpha coefficients of .85, .80, .85, and .83 for inspiration; .92, .88, .95, and .95 for awe; and .79, .90, .81, and .93 for empowerment. Similarly strong alpha coefficients were found in this study: inspiration, .85; awe, .89; and empowerment, .83.

Behling and McFillen did not report details of a factor analysis on their scale, but a factor analysis in this study, using principal axis factoring and direct oblimin rotation requesting three factors, produced the factor loadings shown in Table 2 accounting for 66% of the variance in the data. The underlined loadings in Table 2 show Behling and McFillen's allocation of items to subscales (e.g., the first five items in Table 2 are part of the scale for inspiration). As can be seen from Table 2, all of the 15 items loaded highest on the factors on which they were expected to load. In this study, all 15 items were used in the manner originally proposed by Behling and McFillen. All were

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scored on Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*).

*Organizational commitment.* Allen and Meyer (1990) identified and operationalized affective, continuance, and normative organizational commitment scales. The median internal reliabilities of the three scales in past research are .85, .79, and .73, respectively, based on 40 employee samples representing more than 16,000 employees from 1987 to 1995 (Allen & Meyer, 1996). Similarly strong internal reliabilities of .83, .80, and .73, respectively, were found in this study. The scale includes 24 items: eight items for each of the three subscales. Example items include, "I really feel as if this organization's problems are my own" (affective commitment), "Right now, staying with my organization is a matter of necessity as much as desire" (continuance commitment), and "I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one organization" (normative commitment). All were scored on Likert-type scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*).

*Independence of measures.* Finally, a factor analysis involving all 57 items was conducted to test the independence of the measures for leader behaviors, follower beliefs, and organizational commitment. An interpretable factor structure was obtained with a 15-factor solution, with all 33 leader behavior and follower belief items loading as expected on nine separate factors (with only the item "The leader tries to understand follower's values" loading on an unintended "assures followers of competency" factor, as was found in the previous factor analysis described above) and the 24 organizational commitment items loading on a further six separate factors rather than the expected three factors. When fewer than 15 factors were requested, the commitment factors remained independent and the leader behavior and follower belief items started collapsing into fewer than nine factors. Overall, this validity check supports the independence of the various measures. This validity check raises a question concerning the factor structure of the organizational commitment items; however, given the long history of the Allen and Meyer commitment scales, and the satisfactory alphas for these scales describe above, it was decided to retain the original commitment scales without modification.

### PROCEDURE

The questionnaires used in this study were given to the various managers in person, for distribution to the subordinates. Completion of the

questionnaires by subordinates was voluntary and anonymous. Questionnaires were returned via mail direct to the researcher. Of 238 questionnaires distributed, 178 were completed, resulting in a response rate of 76%.

## RESULTS

### ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT

Table 3 shows the means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations of all variables. A notable feature of Table 3 is that only affective commitment, and not continuance or normative commitment, showed consistently significant correlations with follower beliefs and leader behaviors. This finding supports research discussed earlier in this article that, of the three forms of commitment developed by Allen and Meyer (1990), affective commitment correlates more strongly than the other forms of commitment with a broad range of organizational variables. For these reasons, affective commitment was chosen to represent commitment in the model to be tested; in subsequent analyses involving commitment, scores for affective commitment were used. No further analyses in this article involved the use of scores of continuance or normative commitment.

### MEDIATIONAL MODEL

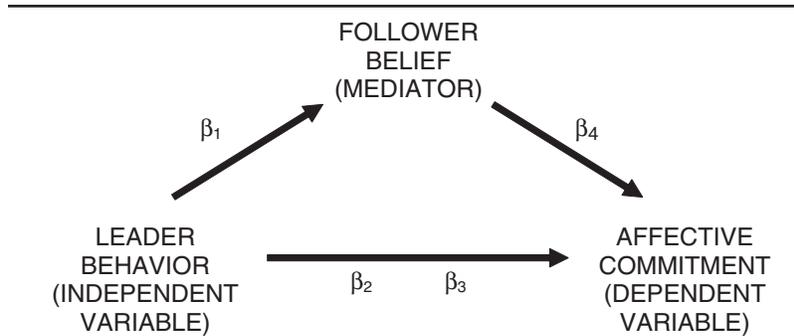
The mediational relationships predicted by the Syncretical Model between specific combinations of leader behaviors, followers' beliefs, and organizational commitment (as in Figure 1) were examined using procedures outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986) and explained below (see Figure 2).

The presence or absence of mediation was examined for all possible combinations of the six leader behaviors and three follower beliefs, resulting in 18 separate analyses. As shown in Figure 1 and discussed earlier in this article, Behling and McFillen (1996) predicted that 6 of these analyses should find significant mediation, and 12 of the analyses should not find the presence of mediation. For each of the 18 analyses, three regression equations were computed and the regression coefficients were examined. In equation 1 (shown as  $\beta_1$  in Figure 2), scores on each leader behavior (e.g., displays empathy) were used to predict the associated follower belief scores (e.g., inspiration). In equation 2 (shown as  $\beta_2$  in Figure 2), scores on each leader behavior were used to predict affective commitment scores. In equation 3, the leader behavior scores and the associated follower belief scores were

TABLE 3  
Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations for Variables in the Study

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1 Affective commitment	32.2	7.0											
2 Continuance commitment	26.1	7.6	.21**										
3 Normative commitment	29.4	6.3	.53**	.41**									
4 Inspiration	25.6	3.6	.58**	.04	.34**								
5 Awe	24.8	4.2	.41**	.14	.14	.31**							
6 Empowerment	26.3	2.5	.22**	-.03	.09	.23**	.22**						
7 Displays empathy	13.0	2.6	.33**	.14	.19*	.24**	.60**	.15*					
8 Dramatizes mission	14.6	2.5	.38**	.11	.11	.28**	.58**	.11	.45**				
9 Projects self-assurance	13.8	3.0	.22**	.11	-.01	.05	.61**	.02	.35**	.54**			
10 Enhances image	13.1	2.9	.17**	-.01	.05	.14	.23**	.15*	.24**	.21**	.20**		
11 Assures followers of competency	14.8	2.5	.26**	.10	.04	.16*	.63**	.18*	.58**	.66**	.49**	.25**	
12 Provides opportunities for success	14.9	2.4	.38**	.12	.15*	.27**	.68**	.12	.51**	.52**	.47**	.20**	.60**

\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .01$ .



**Figure 2: Mediation Model of Leader Behaviors, Follower Beliefs, and Affective Commitment**

used to simultaneously predict affective commitment (beta for leader behavior =  $\beta_3$ ; beta for follower belief =  $\beta_4$ ).

Some, but not all, regression results were consistent with a significant mediating effect of follower belief scores on leader behavior scores and affective commitment scores, because they complied with Baron and Kenny's (1986) four requirements for mediation, as follows. First, the regression coefficient  $\beta_1$  needs to be significant (i.e., the independent variable must predict the mediator). Second, the coefficient  $\beta_2$  must be significant (i.e., the independent variable must predict the dependent variable). Third, the coefficient  $\beta_4$  must be significant (i.e., the mediator must predict the dependent variable when controlling for the independent variable). Fourth,  $\beta_3$  should be smaller than  $\beta_2$  (i.e., controlling for the mediator should reduce the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable). These four requirements indicate at least partial mediation. A fifth condition of  $\beta_3$  being not significant indicates complete mediation. In summary, then, at least some level of mediation is occurring when  $\beta_1$ ,  $\beta_2$ , and  $\beta_4$  are significant, and when  $\beta_3$  is smaller than  $\beta_2$ ; complete mediation is occurring when the above conditions are met and  $\beta_3$  is not significant.

As can be seen in Table 4, using an adjusted alpha of .01 to account for the large number of analyses, these conditions were met in 9 out of the 18 possible mediational relationships, and 5 of these 9 mediational relationships were examples of complete mediation (i.e.,  $\beta_3$  was not significant).

Table 4 indicates that the mediational effects were not statistically significant in 9 out of 18 cases because they fail Baron and Kenny's first criterion

**TABLE 4**  
**Standardized Regression Coefficients Used to Test Mediation With**  
**Leader Behaviors as Independent Variables, Follower Beliefs as**  
**Mediators, and Affective Commitment as the Dependent Variable**

Leader Behavior (Independent Variable)	Follower Beliefs (Mediator)		
	Inspiration	Awe	Empowerment
Displays empathy	$\beta_1 = .24^*$	$\beta_1 = .60^{**}$	$\beta_1 = .15$
	$\beta_2 = .33^{**}$	$\beta_2 = .33^{**}$	
	$\beta_3 = .20^*$	$\beta_3 = .13$	
	$\beta_4 = .53^{**}$ $R^2 = .37^{**}$	$\beta_4 = .34^{**}$ $R^2 = .17^{**}$	
Dramatizes mission	$\beta_1 = .28^{**}$	$\beta_1 = .58^{**}$	$\beta_1 = .11$
	$\beta_2 = .38^{**}$	$\beta_2 = .38^{**}$	
	$\beta_3 = .24^{**}$	$\beta_3 = .22^*$	
	$\beta_4 = .51^{**}$ $R^2 = .38^{**}$	$\beta_4 = .29^*$ $R^2 = .19^{**}$	
Projects self-assurance	$\beta_1 = .05$	$\beta_1 = .61^{**}$	$\beta_1 = .02$
		$\beta_2 = .22^*$	
		$\beta_3 = -.05$	
		$\beta_4 = .45^{**}$ $R^2 = .16^{**}$	
Enhances image	$\beta_1 = .14$	$\beta_1 = .23^*$	$\beta_1 = .15$
		$\beta_2 = .17$	
		$\beta_3 = .08$	
		$\beta_4 = .40^{**}$ $R^2 = .17^{**}$	
Assures followers of competency	$\beta_1 = .16$	$\beta_1 = .63^{**}$	$\beta_1 = .18$
		$\beta_2 = .26^*$	
		$\beta_3 = -.00$	
		$\beta_4 = .42^{**}$ $R^2 = .16^{**}$	
Provides opportunity for success	$\beta_1 = .27^{**}$	$\beta_1 = .68^{**}$	$\beta_1 = .12$
	$\beta_2 = .38^{**}$	$\beta_2 = .38^{**}$	
	$\beta_3 = .24^{**}$	$\beta_3 = .19$	
	$\beta_4 = .51^{**}$ $R^2 = .38^{**}$	$\beta_4 = .29^*$ $R^2 = .18^{**}$	

$\beta_1$  = Standardized coefficient when using the leader behavior (independent variable) to predict the follower belief (mediator); should be significant for a mediation to exist.

$\beta_2$  = Standardized coefficient when using the leader behavior (independent variable) to predict affective commitment (dependent variable); should be significant for a mediation to exist.

$\beta_3$  = Standardized coefficient when using the leader behavior (independent variable) to predict affective commitment (dependent variable) while controlling for the follower belief (mediator); should be smaller than  $\beta_2$  for a mediation to exist.

$\beta_4$  = Standardized coefficient when using the follower belief (mediator) to predict affective commitment (dependent variable) while controlling for the leader behavior (independent variable); should be significant for a mediation to exist.

$R^2$  = Adjusted  $R^2$  values using independent variable and mediator simultaneously in a linear regression to predict affective commitment.

\*  $p < .01$ . \*\*  $p < .001$ .

that the regression coefficient  $\beta_1$  be significant in the first regression equation (i.e., the independent variable must predict the mediating variable). The nine nonsignificant mediational relationships indicate the following: The follower belief of empowerment does not mediate the relationship between any of the leader behaviors and affective commitment; inspiration mediates the relationships between “displays empathy,” “dramatizes mission,” and “provides opportunity for success” and affective commitment; inspiration does not mediate the relationships between “projects self-assurance,” “enhances image,” and “assures followers of competency” and affective commitment; and finally, awe mediates the relationship between all six leader behaviors and affective commitment, five of which are examples of full mediation.

Although it is discussed in more detail later in this article, it is worthwhile noting here that this pattern of significant and nonsignificant mediational relationships is far more complex than suggested by the original Syncretical Model presented by Behling and McFillen (1996) and shown in Figure 1.

Given the correlational nature of the data, and that all data were collected from the same source, the direction of the above mediation effects was tested by running similar analyses but using follower beliefs as independent variables and leader behaviors as mediator variables. If mediations were not found in this reverse direction, more strength could be placed in the suggestion that perceived leader behaviors had a causal effect on follower beliefs, rather than the alternative model in which follower beliefs had a causal effect on perceived leader behaviors. The findings of these follow-up mediation analyses are as follows. All of the nine groupings that failed to produce a significant mediation effect previously also failed to show a mediation effect here. Of the significant mediations from the previous analyses (which showed five full mediation effects and an average difference between  $\beta_2$  and  $\beta_3$  of .18, suggesting reasonably strong mediation effects), there appeared to be little or no mediation effects when using beliefs as independent variables and behaviors as mediators (there were no full mediation effects, and the average difference between  $\beta_2$  and  $\beta_3$  for the remaining mediations was .05). In summary, these analyses suggest that if there is a causal relationship between perceived leader behaviors and follower beliefs, it is more likely to be from behaviors to beliefs rather than in the opposite direction.

### STRUCTURAL EQUATION MODEL

Whereas the above analysis of mediating effects examines each follower belief and leader behavior independently, a structural equation model was also used to test the entire model of Behling and McFillen, with all paths being tested simultaneously. Because of the acceptable but moderate sample

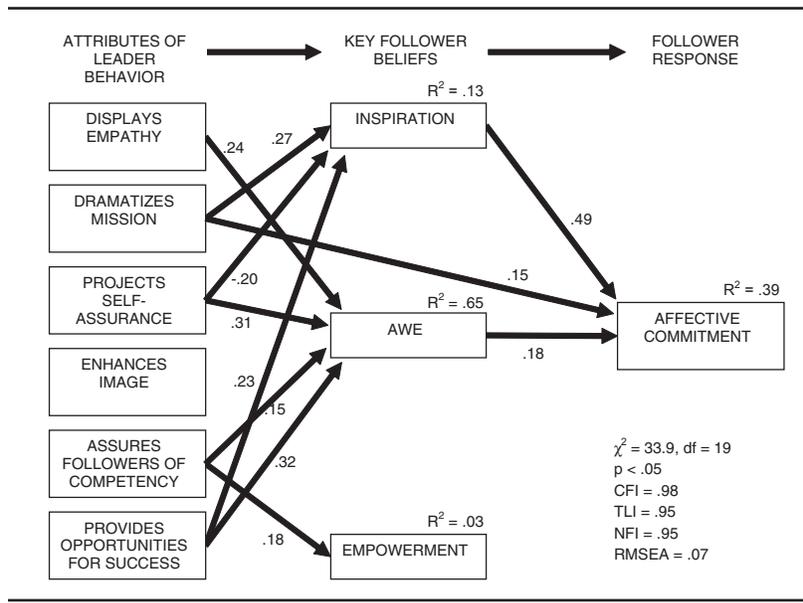


Figure 3: Testing Components of Behling and McFillen’s (1996) Model Using Structural Equation Modeling

size, the model was tested using aggregated scores for the 10 variables as the direct measures with no latent variables (using items scores and latent variables with such a complex model would require a substantially larger sample). The resulting model produced the following fit statistics:  $\chi^2 = 141.2$  ( $df = 21$ ),  $p < .0005$ , Cumulative Fit Index (CFI) = .81, Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) = .60, Normed Fit Index (NFI) = .80, and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = .18. These fit statistics indicate that Behling and McFillen’s original model provides a poor fit of the data.

Through the use of modification indices, adding paths with coefficients equal to or greater than .15, and removing paths with coefficients less than .15, the revised structural equation model in Figure 3 was produced, showing stronger goodness-of-fit measures. Although the chi-square value is still significant (which is not desired), it is substantially smaller (as is desired) than for the original model while having only slightly smaller degrees of freedom. Similarly, the RMSEA is substantially lower (as is desired) than for the original model. Finally, the model meets generally accepted requirements of a CFI, TLI, and NFI of .95 or greater. Overall, the revised model provides a much better fit of the current data than the original Behling and McFillen

model. Of course, the revised model still needs to be cross-validated on another set of data to ensure that the revised model is not reflecting peculiarities in the current data, providing an opportunity for further research.

The results show that both inspiration and awe explain unique variance in affective commitment, but empowerment does not explain any variance beyond that explained by inspiration and awe. "Dramatizes mission" was the only leader behavior to explain additional variance in affective commitment beyond that explained by inspiration and awe. On the whole, inspiration, awe, and "dramatizes mission" explained a substantial 39% of the variance in affective commitment.

"Dramatizes mission," "projects self-assurance," and "provides opportunities for success" were the only leader behaviors to explain unique variance in the follower belief of inspiration (accounting for a total of 13% of the variance of inspiration); it is interesting that "projects self-assurance" showed a negative relationship with inspiration.

The leader behaviors of "displays empathy," "projects self-assurance," "assures followers of competency," and "provides opportunities for success" combined to explain a substantial 65% of the variance of the follower belief of awe.

Finally, "assures followers of competency" was the only leader behavior to significantly predict the follower belief of empowerment, although only a practically unimportant 3% of the variance in empowerment was explained.

## DISCUSSION

The study was designed to examine relationships between charismatic transformational leader behavior, follower beliefs of inspiration, awe, and empowerment, and the follower response of commitment, and to explore whether follower beliefs mediated the relationship between leader behaviors and commitment as hypothesized by Behling and McFillen's (1996) Syncretical Model.

Initial correlational analyses yielded mostly significant positive inter-correlations between the six charismatic transformational leader behaviors, the three follower beliefs, and affective commitment (see Table 3). However, both continuance and normative commitment were largely unrelated to the six leader behaviors and three follower beliefs, so scores for affective commitment were used to represent organizational commitment in all subsequent analyses. Mediation analyses and a structural equation model found patterns of relationships between the leader behaviors, follower beliefs, and affective

commitment that were far more complex (see Table 4 and Figure 3) than suggested in the original Syncretical Model (shown in Figure 1).

The results provide partial support for only two of the three hypotheses derived from Behling and McFillen's original theory. Hypothesis 1 (which suggested that inspiration would mediate the relationship between commitment and both "displays empathy" and "dramatizes mission") was supported by the mediation analyses but only found partial support in the structural equation model in which inspiration mediated only the relationship between "dramatizes mission" and commitment. Hypothesis 2 (which suggested that awe would mediate the relationship between commitment and both "projects self-assurance" and "enhances image") again found support in the mediation analyses but again found only partial support in the structural equation model in which awe mediated only the relationship between "projects self-assurance" and commitment. Hypothesis 3 (which suggested that empowerment would mediate the relationship between commitment and both "assures followers of competency" and "provides opportunities for success") found no support in either mediation analyses or the structural equation model.

The above-mentioned results concerning the three hypotheses represent the primary focus for this study. Nevertheless, several other findings provide insight into the variables, scales, and theories being explored here.

First, quite strong support was found for the psychometric properties of Behling and McFillen's (1996) LBS and FBS. While confirming the acceptable internal reliability figures found by Behling and McFillen, this study also demonstrated sound factor structure of both the LBS and FBS when factor analyzed separately (see Tables 1 and 2) as well as when combined into a single factor analysis. Of the 33 items across the two scales, only one item consistently did not load highest on the intended factor ("The leader tries to understand followers' values"—an item in the "displays empathy" scale that on both occasions loaded higher on the "assures followers of competency" scale). Hence, although perhaps a precautionary eye could be kept on this poorly performing item, the scales can be used with confidence as short, sound measures of multiple aspects of charismatic transformational leadership and followers' beliefs in such leadership.

Second, a consistent finding across all analyses (see Tables 3 and 4 and Figure 3) was that, of the three follower beliefs, awe was by far the most strongly predicted by the leader behaviors. Behling and McFillen defined awe in terms of unreasoning faith in the leader and affection toward him or her. Awe has been reflected elsewhere as a follower perception that a charismatic leader possesses an inspired gift (Bass, 1985; Weber, 1923/1964) with followers having unquestioning acceptance of, and reverence toward, the charismatic leader who is admired, respected, idolized, and trusted (Bass,

1985, 1998; Conger & Kanungo, 1987; House, 1999; Shamir, 1991; Yukl & Van Fleet, 1992). According to Bass (1985), the typical response to charismatic transformational leadership involves awe, devotion, blind faith, and an unqualified belief in the “man and his mission” (p. 36). The findings from this study support these previous claims.

The third ancillary finding of this study was that, of all six leader behaviors and all three follower beliefs, inspiration was by far the strongest predictor of affective commitment. This result is perhaps in part due to the similarity of items (e.g., “I believe in the work my organization/unit does” from the inspiration scale, and “This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me” from the affective commitment scale), although the previously discussed factor analysis involving all measures showed that inspiration and affective commitment were independent constructs. Nevertheless, the result suggests that the emotional commitment an individual feels toward, and invests in, an organization has less to do with belief in, and emotional attachment to, a leader (represented by awe) or belief in one’s own abilities (represented by empowerment), and more closely related to the correspondence between an organization’s goals and purpose and one’s own values.

Fourth, the above observation concerning inspiration and the results shown in the structural equation model in Figure 3 provide some support for the previously discussed distinction between charismatic and transformational theories of leadership. Discussed earlier in this article were Musser (1987), Conger (1989), and Collins (2001), who all highlighted a potential dark side to the egocentricity often associated with charismatic leaders. In this study, the leader behaviors of “projects self-assurance” and “enhances image” are perhaps the most closely aligned with the charismatic theories because they are the most self-focused of the six behaviors and involve the greatest level of impression management on the part of the leader, characteristics discussed in most charismatic theories of leadership. It is interesting that “enhances image” showed no relationships with other variables in the revised structural equation model, and “projects self-assurance” showed a significant negative relationship with inspiration. These findings lend support for the behaviors more closely aligned with transformational theories of leadership, rather than those aligned with the older charismatic theories. Although part of Behling and McFillen’s intention in developing their original model was to combine elements of both charismatic and transformational theories, one interpretation of these results is that the elements of their model most closely aligned with the transformational theories might prove to be those most closely related to other desirable work-related outcomes.

An alternative explanation for the discrepancy between the charismatic and transformational behaviors might derive from all data being collected from subordinates. It is possible that the wording of, in particular, the “enhances image” items, as well as perhaps the “projects self-assurance” items, has negative connotations for followers. Phrases such as “shows off” and “acts in ways designed to impress” may be perceived negatively by followers when completing the LBS. It is possible that such behaviors might show relatively stronger positive relationships with desirable follower beliefs if the LBS was completed by the leader rather than the follower. Further research, involving data collected from both leaders and followers, is needed to tease apart these two explanations for the finding here that transformational behaviors showed stronger relationships than charismatic behaviors with follower beliefs.

A final interesting ancillary finding in this study is the lack of results linking empowerment with affective commitment or charismatic transformational leadership behaviors. The revised structural equation model showed that only one leader behavior (“assures followers of competency”) predicted empowerment, and empowerment played no role in predicting commitment. It should be noted that this finding does not necessarily argue against the Behling and McFillen’s inclusion of empowerment in their model. This study chose only commitment to represent the follower responses in the Syncretical Model, whereas Behling and McFillen suggested that alternative follower responses may include behaviors such as being willing to take risks. It is logically possible that empowerment may be more closely related to follower responses not examined in this study. Clearly, an avenue for further research involves repeating this study using Behling and McFillen’s other follower response variable of “willingness to take risks.” Doing so would enable a more complete conclusion being drawn about the effects of the follower belief of empowerment, as well as enabling testing of the mediation effects proposed by Behling and McFillen for alternative follower responses.

## CONCLUSION

This study’s use of mediation analyses and structural equation modeling has enabled a detailed scrutiny of the relationship between leader and follower proposed by Behling and McFillen (1996) in their Syncretical Model of Charismatic Transformational Leadership. Although the simplicity of the original model (shown in Figure 1) may have visual and pragmatic appeal, the results from this study reinforce the complexity of the relationships

between leader behaviors, follower beliefs, and follower responses. Behling and McFillen deserve praise for the development of what appear to be efficient (i.e., relatively short but still comprehensive) and psychometrically sound measures of leader behaviors and follower beliefs. They also presented a testable model that summarizes and reconciles many different charismatic, transformational, and visionary theories of leadership. This study builds on Behling and McFillen's work by providing an empirical richness to their theoretical work. Results were found emphasizing the strong link between charismatic transformational leadership and follower awe, and between follower inspiration and affective commitment. Finally, the analyses in this study raised questions about the relevance of the charismatic leader behavior of "enhances image" and the follower belief of empowerment for understanding the interplay between charismatic transformational leadership, follower beliefs, and follower responses.

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