



# Transformational leadership as an antecedent of change-oriented organizational citizenship behavior<sup>☆</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

This study draws on a general framework of proactive motivation to propose and test a model that evaluates the influence of the individualized consideration dimension of transformational leadership and organizational climate on change-oriented organizational citizenship behavior. In this model, individuals' cognitive emotional states (role breadth self-efficacy and felt responsibility for constructive change) act as mediating variables. For the first time in the literature, this paper develops a model of leadership and organizational climate antecedents of organizational citizenship behavior. Using a sample of 602 Spanish employees with higher education, the structural equation modeling indicates that the proposed model fits reasonably well to the data. Research results show that all hypotheses are significant, thus confirming the results of previous research that finds mediated relations between transformational leadership and other dimensions of organizational citizenship behavior.

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## 1. Introduction

In the last three decades, researchers have paid a great amount of attention to the concept of organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). Currently, researchers consider that OCB is a multidimensional construct, covering different facets of discretionary behavior not directly related with job content behaviors (Podsakoff et al., 2000). Such behaviors can fall into two broad groups: affiliative and challenging OCB (Bettencourt, 2004; Williams & Nadin, 2012). The affiliative dimensions of OCB are behaviors that promote group cohesion, maintaining existing working relationships or arrangements. According to Choi (2007), these affiliative dimensions are helping behavior, sportsmanship, organizational loyalty, civic virtue, and self-development. The challenging OCB encompasses “voluntary act[s] of creativity and innovation designed to improve one's task or the organization's performance” (Podsakoff et al., 2000: 524), thus fostering organizational change. An ongoing stream of literature, mostly grounded in social exchange theory, examines the antecedents of the affiliative OCB. The results of empirical research show that affiliative OCB relates with organizational leadership (Kwan, Lui, & Yim, 2011; Wang, Law, Hackett, Wang, & Chen, 2005), supervisor trust building (Deluga, 1994) and procedural justice

(Karriker & Williams, 2009; Williams & Gurtoo, 2012). Organizational-member and leader-member exchanges are two elements that act as mediators of the relationship between these constructs and OCB. Only a few pieces of research examine the antecedents of challenging OCB (for example, Choi, 2007), and in particular change-oriented OCB.

Considering LePine and Van Dyne's (2001:326) definition of voice, conceptualized as “constructive change-oriented communication intended to improve the situation” and Morrison and Phelps (1999: 403) definition of taking charge, which refers to those “voluntary and constructive efforts to affect organizationally functional change”, Choi (2007) re-elaborates the change-oriented OCB definition offered by Bettencourt (2004). According to Choi, change-oriented OCB refers to the “constructive efforts by individuals to identify and implement changes with respect to work methods, policies, and procedures to improve the situation and performance” (Choi, 2007: 469).

Extant research on OCB focuses mainly on the affiliative dimensions of the construct (Bettencourt, 2004). In spite of their potential as drivers of organizational change, the challenging dimensions of OCB receive little attention by researchers in works published to date (Ashworth, 2012; Choi, 2007; Datta, 2012). In this regard, and noting that few authors establish some of the possible antecedents of change-oriented OCB (e.g. Bettencourt, 2004; Choi, 2007), this research aims at examining proactive behaviors in the field of organizational citizenship behavior. More specifically, this research is one of the first attempts to propose and test a model centered on transformational leadership and organizational climate as mediated antecedents of change-oriented organizational citizenship behavior, through their direct impact upon individuals' cognitive-emotional states. This model draws upon Parker, Bindl, and Strauss (2010) model of proactive motivation

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and the extant research that recognizes the importance of transformational leadership and innovative organizational climate upon this type of behavior (e.g., Bettencourt, 2004; Choi, 2007; Scott & Bruce, 1994; Waikayi, Fearon, Morris, & McLaughlin, 2012).

## 2. Theoretical framework and hypotheses

People are not always passive recipients of environmental constraints on their behavior; rather they can intentionally and directly change their current circumstances (Crant, 2000). Fuller, Marler, and Hester (2006) suggest that access to strategic information and resources can provide opportunities for individuals to adopt change-oriented behaviors, but only some of them can respond to this opportunity. The builders of proactive behaviors, such as change-oriented OCB, can be individual characteristics, leadership and organizational climate.

According to the interactionist perspective, certain situational factors can trigger personality traits that reside in individuals. Therefore, such traits are essential to understanding the situational factors that interfere with proactive work behavior (Fuller & Marler, 2009). Nevertheless, Mumford and Gustafson (1988) argue that, even if individuals develop their ability to innovate, their beliefs about the consequences of such actions in a given environment can condition their willingness to make productive efforts. In this context, both leadership and one's perception regarding organizational climate become increasingly important.

According to Parker et al. (2010), some traits of the individual, such as personality, work context, and the interaction between these two traits, influence behavior through motivational states. Contextual factors, namely organizational climate and leadership, motivate individuals to undertake actions entailing a high potential risk, generating on organizational members cognitive-motivational states that drive them to undertake change-oriented behaviors (Dutton & Ashford, 1993).

### 2.1. Role breadth self-efficacy (RBSE)

Self-efficacy is important when engaging in proactive behaviors, as these behaviors entail certain psychological risks for individuals. Individuals who are confident in their capabilities are more prone to consider that their actions will be successful, and therefore assume the risk of being proactive (Chen & Chang, 2012; Griffin, Parker, & Mason, 2010; Morrison & Phelps, 1999; Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006). Self-efficacy beliefs link with high levels of taking charge (Morrison & Phelps, 1999) and self-initiative (Frese, Garst, & Fay, 2007), both these constructs being similar to change-oriented citizenship behaviors.

Role breadth self-efficacy (RBSE) refers to employees' perceived capability of carrying out a broader and more proactive set of work tasks that extends beyond prescribed technical requirements (Parker, 1998; Vinces, Cepeda-Carrión, & Chin, 2012). Extant research reports that RBSE is a strong predictor of behaviors such as suggestion making (Axtell et al., 2000), proactive behavior (Ohly & Fritz, 2007), and proactive problem solving (Parker, Williams, Turner, 2006). Additionally, RBSE is an important predictor of employees' innovation (Axtell et al., 2000; Siegel & Renko, 2012) and proactive performance (Griffin, Parker, & Neal, 2008). Various studies indicate that self-efficacy is an important predictor of two types of proactive behavior: personal initiative and taking charge (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). In light of these findings, authors suggest that role breadth self-efficacy is an important explanatory variable to consider when engaging in change-oriented citizenship behaviors.

**H1.** A positive relationship exists between an individual's role breadth self-efficacy (RBSE) and his/her change-oriented OCB.

### 2.2. Felt responsibility for constructive change (FRCC)

Constructive change-oriented behavior is likely to arise from the psychological state of feeling responsible for constructive change (FRCC),

which refers to "an individual's belief that he or she is personally obligated to bring about constructive change" (Morrison & Phelps, 1999: 407). Morrison and Phelps (1999) argue that a positive relationship exists between feeling responsible for constructive change and taking-charge. Fuller et al. (2006) analyze the antecedents of proactive behaviors, defined as constructive, change-oriented communications (voice behavior) and proactive role performance (continuous improvement), and their research findings indicate that a positive relationship exists between proactive personality and both behaviors, based on an individual's access to resources, access to strategic information, and felt-responsibility to change. Finally, Choi's (2007) results show that psychological empowerment and felt responsibility to change act as mediators in the relationship between change-oriented OCB and the antecedents included in his study.

**H2.** A positive relationship exists between an individual's felt responsibility for constructive change and his or her change-oriented OCB.

Felt responsibility for constructive change is a proactive mechanism, that explains the psychological process in which structural and socio-structural factors influence proactive behavior. However, Parker and Turner (2002) argue that proactive motivation not only implies willingness to put more effort in, but also willingness to proactively and flexibly apply this effort. Felt-responsibility for constructive change is a more dynamic concept compared with felt responsibility for the execution of assigned tasks. Consequently, FRCC is a malleable psychological state, which reflects the will to exert a greater effort, generate an improvement, develop new procedures, and correct problems in a constructive way that favors the organization. Besides being able to do something (RBSE is a motivational state that makes individuals believe they can do things), a motivational state that drives individuals to believe that they have a reason to do something, such as FRCC is also necessary. Individuals may feel able to improve the working methods, but have no compelling reason to do so. Therefore, they need to want to be proactive or see value associated with being proactive to change a particular target (Parker et al., 2010).

**H3.** An individual's felt responsibility to change (FRCC) partially mediates the relation between role breadth self-efficacy (RBSE) and change-oriented OCB.

### 2.3. Transformational leadership: individualized consideration

The true essence of transformational leadership is that these leaders cause followers to go beyond expectations (Podsakoff et al., 2000; Vega-Vazquez, Cossio, & Martin-Ruiz, 2012). As a result, transformational leadership has an important impact upon extra-role performance and organizational citizenship behaviors.

Individualized consideration, a component of transformational leadership, may concentrate on changing followers' motives, moving them to consider not just their self-interests but also the moral and ethical implications of their actions and goals. The net effect on the individuals is to re-examine priorities among their needs, aspirations for achievement and impending challenges (Avolio & Bass, 1995; Vila, Perez, & Morillas, 2012). These considerations stress the need of examining the relation between the two individualized consideration dimensions of transformational leadership (supportive and developmental leaderships) and change-oriented citizenship behaviors.

According to Rafferty and Griffin (2004) transformational leaders will display a number of developmentally-oriented behaviors, including coaching followers, identifying appropriate training courses for followers to undertake and encouraging followers to develop their job-related skills and abilities, in order to foster their self-confidence on undertaking a wide range of proactive tasks. Their research findings indicate that developmental leadership will display a significant positive

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