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THE FEEDBACK-SEEKER IN HIS SOCIAL LABYRINTH: THE MEDIATING ROLE OF GOALS AND COOPERATIVE NORMS IN LINKING EMPOWERING LEADERSHIP TO FEEDBACK-SEEKING BEHAVIOR

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the intra-personal and interpersonal mechanisms through which empowering leaders impact their followers' selection of feedback sources. Drawing on goal theories and the group-norms literature, we developed and tested an individual and multilevel model of feedback-seeking behavior. Using a sample of 991 employees, working in 185 teams, we found that empowering leaders indirectly influenced their followers' selection of feedback sources by encouraging autonomous goal pursuit and cooperative group norms.

INTRODUCTION

Feedback-seeking behavior, "*the conscious devotion of effort toward determining the correctness and adequacy of behavior for attaining valued end states*"(Ashford, 1986, p 466), is an important employee resource in today's organizations. As the structure of modern work is increasingly characterized by little information about task objectives, ambiguity about work roles and limited direction from others (Hulin & Glomb, 1999; Uhl-Bien & Graen, 1998), employees need to take charge of their own professional development and seek feedback on issues that go beyond the information delivered by traditional feedback systems (Ashford, Blatt, & VandeWalle, 2003). Feedback-seeking behavior enables employees to evaluate their goal-progress (Morrison & Weldon, 1990), clarify role expectations (Wanberg & Kammeyer-Mueller, 2000), develop high-quality relationships with supervisors (Lam, Huang, & Snape, in press), create a good impression (Ashford & Tsui, 1991; Edwards, 1995) and improve their in-role performance (Chen, Lam, & Zhong, 2007). While the individual and organizational benefits of feedback seeking are evident, there is still much to be learned about how it can be promoted as a common practice in organizations (Ashford et al., 2003; Levy & Williams, 2004; Steelman, Levy, & Snell, 2004). Practitioner oriented publications advise managers about how to nurture a climate in which subordinates feel free to seek feedback and ask their supervisors, coworkers and other relevant sources for advice and guidance (e.g. London, 1997; Moss, 2004). However, whereas the impact of leadership on subordinates' feedback-inquiry from their supervisor has been extensively researched (e.g. Levy, Cober, & Miller, 2002; Madzar, 2001; VandeWalle, Ganesan, Challagalla, & Brown, 2002), no studies have explored how leaders more broadly affect the feedback-seeking patterns of their subordinates. It seems that in spite of numerous pleas for more comprehensive operationalizations of feedback-seeking behavior (e.g. Grant & Ashford, in press), the feedback-seeking literature has not escaped the pitfalls described by Higgins and Kram (2001). These authors criticized the general tendency of organizational scholars to focus on primary sources and forms of communication instead of considering the multiple sources from whom and the various ways in which individuals receive and seek assistance. Given the emphasis placed on horizontal knowledge-sharing and self-management in today's organizations (Drucker, 1994; Higgins et al., 2001), this is an important research gap to be addressed.

In this study, we therefore draw on the literature on goals (e.g. Carver, 2004; Cervone, Mor, Orom, Shadel, & Scott, 2004; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Locke & Latham, 2002) and group norms (e.g. Ehrhart & Naumann, 2004; Feldman, 1984; Wageman, 1995) to elucidate how leaders can foster a context in which their followers develop a habit of seeking feedback from a wide variety of feedback sources. More specifically, we examine the mediating role of individual goals and cooperative group norms in the relationship between empowering leadership and the diverse sources from whom feedback is sought. We focus on empowering leadership because it captures the reality of self-management for employees and thus offers a relevant framework for studying the context factors that affect feedback-seeking behavior. In addition, employee perceptions of empowerment have been linked to proactivity (Spreitzer, 1995) and feedback-seeking behavior (Chen et al., 2007) in prior work. We adopt the definition of empowering leadership presented by Srivastava et al. (2006): *"behaviors whereby power is shared with subordinates and that raise their level of intrinsic motivation"* (Srivastava, Bartol, & Locke, 2006, p. 1240).

Although this study is not the first to examine the relationship between leadership style and feedback seeking, it goes beyond previous research in at least three ways. First, whereas prior studies mainly focused on the direct impact of leadership style on feedback-seeking behavior, our study reveals some of the intra-personal and interpersonal mechanisms through which leaders impact followers' feedback seeking. Second, by simultaneously examining within and between person mechanisms as antecedents of feedback seeking, we advance our understanding of the joint impact of these factors. Third, whereas previous work has examined the effects of leadership style on how frequently followers seek feedback from their supervisor, this study more broadly focuses on how supervisors shape the feedback-seeking patterns of their followers (i.e. the various sources from whom feedback is sought). Fourth, from a methodological perspective, our individual- and group-level conceptualization of empowering leadership and group norms allows us to determine the individual-level dynamics of feedback seeking, but also allows us identify the context factors important for feedback seeking, an area that has been under-researched in the literature (Ashford et al., 2003).

This paper is organized as follows. We first highlight the multifaceted nature of the construct of feedback-seeking behavior. Next, we review research linking leadership style to feedback seeking and call attention to the work still remaining.

We then explore two possible mechanisms through which leadership affects feedback seeking: intra-personal goals (autonomous versus controlled goals) and interpersonal norms (cooperative norms). Finally, we describe the research design adopted to answer our research questions.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Feedback-seeking behavior in Organizations: a multi-faceted construct

Feedback-seeking behavior is a multi-faceted concept. It varies in terms of frequency but also in terms of the tactics used to seek feedback, the source targeted for seeking, the timing of seeking and the topic on which feedback is sought (Ashford et al., 2003; VandeWalle, 2003).

Employees can seek feedback using either the tactic of inquiry, which involves direct and verbal requests for performance evaluations, or the more covert tactic of monitoring, which refers to screening the environment for indirect feedback cues (e.g. Ashford & Cummings, 1981). Employees can also seek feedback from various sources. Feedback may be gleaned from the task itself, or it can be sought from social sources, such as individuals in the immediate work context (e.g. supervisors and team members), other organizational sources (e.g. peers in other departments) and extra-organizational sources (e.g. clients) (e.g. Ashford et al., 1991; Miller & Jablin, 1991). Feedback can also be sought at different points in time, for example after good (versus poor) performance (Ashford et al., 2003; Larson, 1989), or intermediately (versus in the final stage of performance) (e.g. Madzar, 1995). Finally, individuals can seek feedback on various topics, such as on strengths or on weaknesses (e.g. Ashford et al., 1991; Chen et al., 2007; Lam et al., in press).

The importance of studying feedback-seeking behavior as a multifaceted construct has received much conceptual attention (e.g. Ashford et al., 2003; Grant et al., in press; VandeWalle, 2003), yet empirical work has mainly operationalized specific patterns of seeking, such as supervisor inquiry. For example, we know that the supervisor's leadership style impacts subordinates' inquiry from their supervisor, but no studies have looked at how supervisors affect their subordinates' selection of alternative feedback sources. In the next section, we further elaborate on how the literature's narrow focus on supervisor inquiry has resulted in an incomplete understanding of the link between leadership style and feedback-seeking behavior.

The uneasy relationship between leadership style and feedback-seeking behavior.

Although research on the context factors affecting feedback seeking is relatively scarce (Ashford et al., 2003), it has long been documented that characteristics of the feedback source affect feedback seeking (e.g. Albright & Levy, 1995; Ang, Cummings, Straub, & Early, 1993; Vancouver & Morrison, 1995). Supervisors have traditional been considered as the primary sources of feedback (e.g. Ashford, 1993; Callister, Kramer, & Turban, 1999) and substantial research has been devoted to assess the effects of the supervisor's leadership style on followers' feedback-seeking behaviors (e.g. Levy et al., 2002; Madzar, 2001, 2005; Vancouver et al., 1995; VandeWalle et al., 2002). Examining the impact of leadership style on feedback seeking, a study by VandeWalle et al. (2000) showed that leader's initiating structure increased subordinates' perceived value of feedback seeking. In the same vein, in a laboratory study, Levy et al. (2002) found that subjects were more likely to seek feedback from transformational leaders than from transactional leaders. Overall, these studies support the view that depending on their leadership style, supervisors can increase or decrease the extent to which subordinates seek feedback from them (Ashford et al., 2003). Though important for enhancing our understanding of the leadership style – feedback seeking relationship, these studies are limited in two ways.

First, they focus on the impact of leadership style on one source and strategy of seeking (i.e. inquiry from the supervisor), but do not depict how it affects a follower's selection of other feedback sources. Yet, recent research in team literature has shown that leader behavior not only impacts subordinates' interactions with their supervisors, but also has important consequences for followers' interaction patterns with other organizational members (Ahearne, Mathieu, & Rapp, 2005; Srivastava et al., 2006). It seems that despite numerous pleas for more comprehensive operationalizations of feedback-seeking behavior (e.g. Grant et al., in press), this literature has not escaped the pitfalls described by Higgins and Kram (2001), who criticized the general tendency of organizational scholars to focus on primary sources and forms of communication instead of considering the multiple sources from whom individuals receive and seek assistance.

A second limitation of studies investigating the relationship between leadership style and feedback-seeking behavior is that they all examined the direct effects of leadership style on feedback seeking.

Yet, leaders do not simply generate follower behavior by their leadership style but have their effects through more complex intrapersonal and interpersonal mechanisms (e.g. Bass, 1999; Bono & Judge, 2003; Deci, Connell, & Ryan, 1989; Kohli, Shervani, & Challagalla, 1998). For example, a vast body of research has shown that through their leadership style, supervisors impact their team members' (individual) goals (Bono & Judge, 2003), (interpersonal) perceptions of efficacy (Srivastava et al., 2006) and (interpersonal) work norms (Jung & Avolio, 1999). This suggests that the relationship between leadership style and feedback-seeking behavior may not be as straightforward as previously assumed.

In a preliminary attempt to fill some of these gaps in literature, Chen and colleagues (2007) theorized that leaders of empowered teams encourage their followers to seek feedback from coworkers rather than from their direct supervisors. Drawing on insights from self-determination theory and the empowerment literature (e.g. Deci et al., 2000; Spreitzer, 1995), they depicted the mechanisms through which such an effect might occur. First, instead of directing and controlling their subordinates, empowering leaders encourage followers to define their own *goals* and performance standards (Kirkman & Rosen, 1999; Manz & Sims, 1987). Second, they generate *norms* for appropriate behavior, as they expect followers to share information with their coworkers and resolve problems among themselves (Chen et al., 2007; Manz et al., 1987; Seibert, Silver, & Randolph, 2004).

As a consequence, followers of empowering leaders have more discretion and become less reliant on their supervisors as the suppliers of goals, direction and feedback (Manz et al., 1987; Seibert et al., 2004). This should result in increased feedback seeking from other sources than just the supervisor (Chen et al., 2007). In contrast, when supervisors provide clear direction by assigning clear work goals to their subordinates and by closely monitoring their performance, this should increase followers' dependence on their supervisor and thus their need to seek feedback from this source, while decreasing the need of seeking feedback from others. Several studies provide indirect support for Chen et al.'s propositions. For example, VandeWalle et al. (2002) found that leaders' initiation of structure increased the frequency of subordinates' supervisor-focused feedback seeking. In the same vein, Chen et al. (2007) showed that compared to highly empowered employees, less empowered employees sought more feedback from their supervisors, providing that they maintained a high-quality relationship with them. However, Chen et al.'s (2007) suggestions that leaders also influence the extent to which feedback is sought from other sources remain untested.

In the next sections we develop theory and hypotheses to test these propositions.

The role of goals in the empowering leadership – feedback seeking relationship.

Following Chen et al. (2007), we propose that empowering leaders influence the type of goals that their followers pursue and that these goals will in turn affect subordinates' feedback-seeking patterns. First, we develop hypotheses regarding the effects of individuals' goals on feedback-seeking behavior. We then discuss the role of empowering leadership in triggering these goals.

Goal characteristics and feedback seeking.

Individual goals shape the feedback-seeking process (Ashford & Cummings, 1983; Morrison et al., 1990; VandeWalle & Cummings, 1997). As outlined by Cervone and colleagues, goals can be differentiated along quantitative and qualitative dimensions (see Cervone et al., 2004 for a review). Quantitative differentiations typically focus on goal specificity, goal difficulty and goal source (assigned versus self-set); qualitative distinctions generally include goal orientation (performance versus learning goals), regulatory focus (promotion versus prevention) and goal internalization (autonomous versus controlled) (Cervone et al., 2004).

Regarding quantitative goal characteristics, research suggests that feedback seeking is more likely to occur in contexts characterized by a clear focus on specific and assigned goals (Morrison et al., 1990; VandeWalle et al., 2002), because clear goals function as reference standards that are used to track goal progress (Ashford, 1993; Bandura & Locke, 2003; Carver, 2004; Carver & Scheier, 1981; Morrison et al., 1990). For example, VandeWalle and colleagues (2002) found that employees who receive specific goals from their supervisor, seek more feedback through inquiry. Similarly, Morrison & Weldon (1990) showed that assigning specific performance goals motivates individuals to engage in feedback inquiry. However, the literature is also replete with studies indicating that also when confronted with ambiguous goals, individuals engage in feedback seeking (e.g. Ashford & Black, 1996; Callister et al., 1999; Fuller, Marler, & Hester, 2006; Wanberg et al., 2000). Although this line of inquiry seems to contradict research indicating that goal clarity (as opposed to goal ambiguity) leads to more feedback seeking, these results are less surprising when we consider the dual function of feedback seeking: on the one hand, it enables employees to track their progress towards their goals; on the other hand, it allows them to clarify their goals (Ashford et al., 1983;

Morrison & Bies, 1991). If this is the case, it may not be very useful to study the impact of quantitative goal characteristics on feedback seeking, but it may be more informative to study the psychological mechanisms that underlie these results.

In this regard, we think it is important to draw attention to recent theorizing in goal-setting (Locke et al., 2002), self-regulation (Carver, 2004), and self-determination theory (Deci et al., 2000). Though differences in emphasis are prominent (Carver, 2004), by and large, these frameworks have moved beyond quantitative conceptualizations of goals and offer a somewhat more complicated picture of how goals shape behavior. Research shows that for goals to be effective, individuals need to internalize them and formulate personal goals in response to them (Deci et al., 2000; Gagné & Deci, 2005; Lee, Locke, & Phan, 1997; Locke et al., 2002). As a result, there is growing consensus that the energizing effects of goals do not simply stem from their quantitative features, such as whether they are self-set (versus assigned) or clear (versus ambiguous), but also from their qualitative characteristics, such as whether they are internalized and accepted (Bono et al., 2003; Carver, 2004; Deci et al., 2000; Locke et al., 2002). These developments have not yet been integrated in feedback-seeking literature and little is known about the feedback-seeking patterns that emerge depending on these qualitative features of followers' goals. One notable exception is the promising line of inquiry inspired by VandeWalle and colleagues, who have uncovered some of the linkages between goal orientation and feedback-seeking behavior (e.g. Porath & Bateman, 2006; Tuckey & Williamson, 2002; VandeWalle et al., 1997; VandeWalle et al., 2002; Yanfei & Wenquan, 2004). Most studies report a positive relationship between a learning-goal orientation (i.e. an orientation toward development) and feedback seeking and a negative relationship between a performance-goal orientation (i.e. an orientation toward demonstrating ability) and feedback seeking. This body of research only focuses on the content of individuals' goals; however, goal theories suggest that the processes and *reasons* underlying goal pursuit also should affect goal-focused behaviors such as feedback seeking (Carver, 2004; Deci et al., 2000; Gagné et al., 2005; Locke et al., 2002). Building on these developments and insights derived from self-determination theory (e.g. Ryan and Deci 2000), Bono and Judge (2003) distinguished between two types of work goals: autonomous and controlled work goals. Whereas autonomous goals are pursued with a sense of personal choice and psychological freedom, controlled goals are pursued with a sense of obligation and psychological restraint (Bono et al., 2003; Gagné et al., 2005). Deci and Ryan (1995) suggest that when individuals pursue autonomous goals, they tend to de-emphasize the significance of others' evaluations. At first blush, this would imply that individuals with autonomous goals

would be less likely to seek feedback. However, we think that an argument could be made for the opposite. More specifically, when individuals pursue autonomous goals, they might feel less dependent and less forced to seek feedback from sources who have formal control, such as authority figures and supervisors. Instead, they might feel the freedom to seek feedback from a wider variety of sources (Chen et al., 2007), rather than from authority figures who have formal power. In addition, given that individuals with autonomous work goals feel that they have more ownership over their goals, may highly value feedback that helps them attain those goals and thus seek it out. This view is supported by research indicating that individuals who have more ownership of their goals, are more likely to engage in proactive behavior (Parker, Williams, & Turner, 2006) and are more likely to seek and process relevant information (Soenens, Berzonsky, Vansteenkiste, Beyers, & Goossens, 2005). Hence:

> *Hypothesis 1:* Subordinates' autonomous work goals will be positively related to feedback inquiry from (a) supervisors; (b) team-members; (c) other organizational sources; (d) extra-organizational sources

On the other hand, we concur with Deci and colleagues that individuals with controlled goals attach more importance to direct rewards and praise from authority figures and thus feel more dependent on authority figures, because they exert formal control over goals and incentives (Deci et al., 2000; Gagné et al., 2005). This might trigger a need to seek feedback from sources with formal power and at the same time decrease the felt necessity to seek feedback from sources who are not formally in charge of goals and rewards. Accordingly:

> *Hypothesis 2:* Subordinates' controlled work goals are negatively related to (a) feedback-inquiry from coworkers; (b) feedback-inquiry from other organizational sources; and (c) feedback-inquiry from extra-organizational sources.
>
> *Hypothesis 3*: Subordinates' controlled work goals will be positively related to feedback-inquiry from their supervisor.

Empowering leadership and followers' goal pursuit.

As noted earlier, empowering leadership may be an important antecedent of followers' goals. To date, studies linking qualitative goal aspects to feedback seeking have mainly adopted a trait perspective (e.g. VandeWalle, 2003; VandeWalle et al., 1997), yet research in social psychology shows that situational cues and important role models affect goal pursuit (Bargh & Chartrand, 1999; Vansteenkiste, Simons, Lens, Sheldon, & Deci, 2004; Wright, Hollenbeck, Wolf, & McMahan, 1995). In work settings, followers pursue different goals depending on the leadership style of their supervisor (e.g. Bono et al., 2003; Deci et al., 1989; Kirkman et al., 1999; Kohli et al., 1998; Manz et al., 1987; Neck, Nourib, & Godwinc, 2003; Parker et al., 2006). For example, in a study examining self-concordance at work, Bono and Judge (2003) found that followers of transformational leaders are more likely to pursue autonomous goals. Empowering leadership is different from transformational leadership, with transformational leadership focusing on the leader and the leader's vision, while empowering leadership involves developing followers' self-leadership (Tekleab, Sims, Yun, Tesluk and Cox, 2008). Though different from transformational leadership, we expect that empowering leadership will produce a similar effect on followers' goals. The empowering approach to leadership is consistent with the notion of autonomous goals, because both emphasize subordinates' psychological ownership of goals. Given that empowering leaders emphasize personal initiative to formulate goals and to identify and solve problems autonomously, we propose that they will affect followers' goals in the following ways:

Hypothesis 4: Empowering leadership will be (a) positively related to subordinates' autonomous goals and (b) negatively related to subordinates' controlled goals

On the basis of our previous hypotheses and on theorizing in the proactivity literature (Crant, 2000), we also expect that followers' goals will mediate the relationship between leadership style and feedback-seeking behavior. In our first set of hypotheses, we asserted that goals shape feedback seeking, while the second set of hypotheses suggested that leaders affect the goals that their followers pursue. Combining these suggestions with prior work that has linked leadership to goals and leadership to feedback seeking (e.g. Chen et al., 2007; Levy et al., 2002; Madzar, 2001; VandeWalle et al., 2002), we expect that goals will mediate the relation between empowering leadership and feedback seeking.

More specifically, we anticipate that followers of empowering leaders will feel more motivated to seek feedback from a wider variety of sources, because they have more ownership over their goals and value feedback that helps them to attain those goals. In contrast, followers of less empowering leaders will possibly feel discouraged to seek feedback from various sources, because their supervisor controls their goals.

Hypothesis 5: Followers' goals (autonomous versus controlled) mediate the relationship between empowering leadership and the sources of feedback seeking.

The role of cooperative norms in the empowering leadership – feedback seeking relationship.

As stated, we also expect that empowering leaders influence their followers' feedback seeking through the norms they nurture. First, we develop hypotheses on how norms are expected to shape the feedback-seeking process. We then discuss the role of empowering leadership in triggering these norms.

Group norms and feedback-seeking behavior.

Group norms are implicit and shared beliefs about the appropriateness of behavior (Birenbaum & Sagarin, 1976; Cialdini & Trost, 1998; Feldman, 1984). They provide group members with heuristics for how to behave and how to evaluate others' behaviors. Prior research has shown that group norms influence how group members interact with each other, how they individually and collectively make decisions, approach and solve problems (Chatman & Flynn, 2001). Particularly cooperative norms, i.e. norms favoring interdependency and collaboration appear to be critical to successful teamwork (Taggar & Ellis, 2007), with empirical work showing that cooperative norms are an important mechanism in explaining team efficiency and team effectiveness (Chatman and Flynn ,2001). Cooperative norms have also been found to stimulate knowledge sharing, information sharing, helping (Deutsch, 1949; Deutsch, Epstein, & Canavon, 1967; Quigley, Tesluk, Locke, & Bartol, 2007; Wageman, 1995; Wageman & Gordon, 2005), team coherence and the resolution of conflicts within groups (Alper, Tjosvold & Law, 2000; Tjosvold, Poon & Zi-Jou, 2005).

These findings are reminiscent of the Theory of Reasoned Action (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975), which proposes that individual behavior is in part determined by (subjective) norms, i.e. perceptions of how relevant others will evaluate the behavior" (Fishbein & Ajzen 1975). In sum, when cooperation is the norm, individuals perceive that they can only reach their goals through collaboration with, reliance on, and assistance of others. This in turn shapes individuals' social behaviors. Accordingly, we expect that cooperative norms will also influence the feedback-seeking process.

Existing research on the impact of group norms on feedback seeking shows that situational norms shape how frequently people inquire for feedback (Ashford et al., 2003; Miller et al., 1991; Morrison & Morrison, 2002). For example, manipulating norms regarding the appropriate amount of feedback seeking, Ashford and Northcraft (1992) found that norms that favored high levels of feedback seeking increased subjects' frequency of feedback inquiry. Although these findings have not yet been replicated in the field, several scholars have suggested that individual perceptions of group norms, but also norms operating at the work group level (Chen et al., 2007) and at the organizational level (Ashford et al., 1991) should affect the feedback-seeking process. The general postulation is that norms provide situational cues regarding the appropriate *level* of feedback seeking. Building on this logic, we suggest that norms may also provide situational cues about *the variety of feedback sources* to seek feedback from (source). For example, if a norm favors cooperation, as could be expected in empowered contexts (Bock, Zmud, Kim, & Lee, 2005), then group members are likely to think that improved effectiveness can only be achieved through collaboration with others. This should result in increased feedback seeking from the various feedback sources. In contrast, when individuals believe that improved effectiveness can only be achieved through individual effort, they will be less likely to seek the assistance from others. Hence:

> *Hypothesis 6:* Cooperative norms are positively related to feedback inquiry from (a) supervisors (b) coworkers; (c) other organizational sources; (d) extra-organizational sources.

Empowering leadership and norms.

We further expect that cooperative group norms will be a function of empowering leadership. The outcomes of group norms have been extensively studied. However, surprisingly, very little is known about norm formation and the transmission of norms in (work) groups (Cialdini & Trost, 1998; Levine, Higgins, & Choi, 2000; Taggar & Ellis, 2007). In some cases, cooperative norms may be formally related to the group's task and to the tangible rewards associated with the completion of that task (Taggar & Ellis, 2007; Quigley, Tesluk, Locke, & Bartol, 2007). However, by and large, teams have discretion on how to go about completing their tasks (Chatman & Flynn, 2001), suggesting that norms are formed through more informal, social regulation methods (Ehrhart & Naumann, 2004). Feldman (1984) noted that one way that group norms develop involves the group leader. Specifically, in work groups, managers may have an important impact on the types of norms espoused by their subordinates (Taggar & Ellis, 2007). Through their discourse and their own behavior, leaders communicate information about what constitutes appropriate behavior (Ehrhart and Naumann 2004; Hogg & Reid, 2007). That is, supervisors guide employee behavior by giving them cues on what is appropriate and desirable. By definition, empowering leaders emphasize interdependence, knowledge-sharing and cooperation as important contributors to group-effectiveness (Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000; Srivastava et al., 2006). This implies that followers of empowering leaders should be more likely to espouse the cooperative norms conveyed by their manager. Thus:

Hypothesis 7: Empowering leadership is positively related to cooperative group norms.

We have proposed that norms shape feedback seeking and that empowering leaders nurture cooperative norms within their team. Integrating these propositions with prior work linking leadership to norms and leadership to feedback-seeking behavior (Ashford et al., 1992; Cialdini & Trost, 1998; Ehrhart et al., 2004), we anticipate that group norms will mediate the relation between empowering leadership and feedback seeking. More specifically:

Hypothesis 8: Cooperative norms mediate the relationship between empowering leadership and the feedback-seeking patterns.

METHODOLOGY

Research population and sampling design

The target population of this study consisted of knowledge workers. Knowledge workers' work is characterized by little information about task objectives and limited direction from others (Drucker, 1994). As a result, accurate system-level feedback is often in short supply; thus actively seeking feedback may be an important individual resource for this group of employees (Ashford et al., 2003). Few studies have explicitly examined the feedback-seeking behaviors of knowledge workers, even though they represent one of the fasted growing segments of our workforce. Studies with knowledge workers as the target population typically survey employees working in the areas of research, product development or consulting (Janz, Colquitt, & Noe, 1997). Five companies active in consulting were involved in our study.

For each of the five organizations a sampling frame was developed in cooperation with the human resources department. The sampling frame consisted of a directory of employees that met the following definition of knowledge workers: *"knowledge workers have high degrees of expertise, education, or experience, and the primary purpose of their jobs involves the creation, distribution or application of knowledge" (Davenport, 2005).* Given that this study also sought to unravel dynamics operating at the group level (e.g. the role of group norms), the sampling frame also included information about work team membership and team supervision. The original sampling frame consisted of 1824 individuals working in 230 work teams ranging from 2 to 11 members. These individuals completed an online survey during regular working hours.

Following Van der Vegt and Janssen (2003), a work team was defined as a group of employees who (1) were the smallest functional unit in the organization; (2) reported directly to the same supervisor; and (3) worked together permanently. Especially the latter criterion was important, with a number of consultants working off-site or in temporary project teams. Given that the human resources departments of the organizations did not always dispose of this information, we included a question on temporary team membership and off-site work in our survey. Individuals, who indicated being member of a temporary team or working off-site, were excluded from the analyses, which resulted in a final sample of 991 employees, working in 185 teams (i.e. a response rate of 54%). On average, employees had held their current job for 2.5 years and had worked in their organization for 4.7 years, of which 3.3 years in their current team. Sixty percent were men, and their average age was 33 years.

Measures

Feedback-seeking behavior

Several scales exist to assess feedback-seeking behavior, most of which distinguish between the tactics used to seek feedback (inquiry versus monitoring) (e.g. Ashford, 1986) and between the content of the feedback sought (positive or negative) (e.g. VandeWalle et al., 2002). As most studies focus on feedback seeking from supervisors, the majority of scales do not distinguish between the various feedback sources. One notable exception is the scale developed by Callister, Kramer and Turban (1999). They adapted Ashford's (1986) original scales to distinguish between supervisor feedback inquiry and coworker feedback inquiry. Because we sought to assess feedback seeking from other sources as well (e.g. peers in other departments, peers in other organizations), we further adapted Callister et al.'s scale so that it also captured the four sources of feedback seeking included in our study: (1) supervisor feedback inquiry, (2) coworker feedback inquiry, (3) feedback inquiry from other organizational sources, and (4) feedback inquiry from extra-organizational sources. Using five-point scales ranging from (1) never to (5) very frequently, respondents indicated the extent to which the feedback-seeking statements corresponded to their own behavior. Sample items include: "How frequently do you directly ask your supervisor for feedback about your work?"; "How frequently do you directly ask your team members for feedback about your work?"; "How frequently do you directly ask your colleagues from other departments for feedback about your work?"; "How frequently do you directly ask people outside your company (e.g. clients or colleagues in other companies) for feedback about your work?" The scales measuring feedback inquiry from colleagues in other departments and from extra-organizational sources had not been used previously. Assessed the construct validity of the entire scale, we found that the correlations between items within the subscales were always larger than the correlations between items across scales, which is a first indication of discriminant validity. In a next step, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) on half of the sample, using principal components analysis with a "varimax" rotation. Inspection of the eigenvalues and screeplots suggested that four factors were represented in the data, corresponding to the four sources of feedback seeking. Finally, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on the other half of the data. The CFA indicated a four factor solution with an excellent fit ($\chi^2 = 38.71$, df = 48, $p > .05$; NNFI = .99; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .01).

We found a similar acceptable fit for a single second-order factor solution, supporting Morrison's (1993) suggestion that individuals also have a general tendency to inquire for feedback. Given that the fit was not significantly improved after the inclusion of a higher order factor and given that our hypotheses were formulated at the subscale level, we continued with the four-factor solution and formed four subscales of feedback seeking, representing the four categories of feedback sources. The reliability coefficients (Cronbach's alphas) for these four subscales were satisfactory, ranging from .82 to .89 (alpha coefficients are presented on the diagonal of the upper part of table 1).

Empowering Leadership. Following Srivastava et al. (2006), empowering leadership was measured using a reduced version of Arnold et al.'s (2000) validated empowering leadership scale, consisting of five subscales: (1) lead by example, (2) participative decision making, (3) informing, (4) coaching, and (5) showing concern. A sample item from the scale is "Our manager teaches our team members how to solve problems on our own". In line with Srivastava et al. (2006), both an EFA and a CFA on the 15 items revealed a single second-order factor solution with an acceptable fit ($\chi^2 = 165.36$, df = 85, $p < .01$; NNFI = .99; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .049). The alpha reliability of the scale was .93.

Autonomous and Controlled goals. To measure individuals' goals, we used the measure developed by Bono and Judge (2003). Followers were asked to identify three short-term, job-related goals (i.e. goals that can be accomplished in 60 days). Next, respondents indicated on a five-point scale why they pursued each goal. Sample items include: "You choose this goal because somebody else wants you to or because the situation demands it" (controlled goals); "You pursue this goal because of the fun and enjoyment it provides you" (autonomous goals). Employees were consistent in their reports of autonomous and controlled goals, as demonstrated by Cronbach alpha coefficients of .69 for controlled and .80 for autonomous goals. In contrast to Bono and Judge, who formed a composite score of goal self-concordance by subtracting the controlled goals score from the autonomous goals score, our EFA and CFA revealed that a two-factor structure captured our data better ($\chi^2 = 16.74$, df = 8, $p < .05$; NNFI = .98; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .045).

***Cooperative group norms*.** Existing scales of cooperative group norms focus on norms regarding cooperative behaviors *within* teams, i.e. norms about cooperation among team members (e.g. Chatman and Flynn, 2002; Wageman, 1995). Because we could not reword these scales to capture individual's perceptions of group norms regarding cooperation in general, we developed our own scale, inspired by scales within the task interdependence literature (e.g. Van der Vegt et al. 2000, 2001, 2003).

Our scale consisted of four items: “We need to collaborate with others to perform our jobs”; “We regularly need to communicate with others about work-related issues”; “Coordinating and cooperating with others is necessary within this team”; “We need information and advice from others to perform our jobs well” (α = .85). The EFA and CFA revealed marginal, but acceptable internal consistency (χ^2 = 27.08, df = 2, p < .05; NNFI = .94; CFI = .99; RMSEA = .16).

Control. Prior research has shown that employees’ tendency to seek feedback largely depends on their work experience (e.g. Ashford, 1986; Ashford & Black, 1996). In keeping with other feedback-seeking studies, we therefore included job tenure as a control variable in our analyses.

Level of analysis and aggregation of data

Following Kozlowski and Klein (2000), we first clarify the level of analysis of the variables within our study. First, as prior research has shown that leaders develop unique relations with their followers, but also have a tendency to exhibit behaviors that are consistent across followers, we defined empowering leadership both as a dyadic process and as a group process. That is, we considered both individual followers’ perceptions of their supervisors as well as well as group perceptions of leadership. The aggregation of individual perceptions of empowering leadership was justified, with a mean $r_{wg(j)}$ value of .95, indicating that subordinates had a shared vision of the empowering leadership demonstrated by their supervisor. In addition, ICC values proved to be acceptable (ICC(1)= .29, p < .05, ICC(2)= .55). Autonomous and controlled goals were conceptualized as intrapersonal mechanisms and were therefore treated as individual-level variables. Cooperative norms, which we conceptualized as an interpersonal mechanism, were treated as a group-level variable. The aggregation of individual perceptions of cooperative group norms was justified, with a mean $r_{wg(j)}$ value of .82, indicating that team members shared the same norms regarding cooperation.

Again, the ICC values were acceptable (ICC(1) = .16, p < .05, ICC(2) = .33). However, as with empowering leadership, we recognize that perceptions of group norms may vary substantially within groups as well. We therefore also considered them at the individual level.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

After the examination of the measurement properties of our variables, we studied the regression structure among the constructs, using Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) (HLM 6.06) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) (LISREL 8.80). Our analyses involved three levels of data: subordinates (level 1), who were nested within teams (level 2) that were nested within organizations (level 3). We conducted two series of analyses: an all-individual level model (i.e. all variables were conceptualized at the individual level) and a cross-level model (with empowering leadership and group norms conceptualized at the group level and all other variables conceptualized at the individual level).

Table 1 presents the means, standard deviations, reliability coefficients and correlations among the study variables.

Insert Table 1 About Here

Individual-level analyses

Given that individual perceptions of empowering leadership were not significantly correlated with all feedback-seeking variables, we could not test all mediation hypotheses based on the criteria proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986). However, since table 1 shows a significant relationship between empowering leadership and autonomous goals and between empowering leadership and cooperative norms, we could test the indirect effect of empowering leadership on the various feedback-seeking behaviors (Kenny, Kashy and Bolger, 1998).

Table 2 presents the significant standardized coefficients for the hypotheses.

Insert Table 2 About Here

Specifically, the results in table 2 show that, as proposed in hypothesis 4a, empowering leadership directly affects goal autonomy ($\beta = .263$, $p < .001$), which in turn influences feedback seeking from the various feedback sources (Hypothesis 1a – 1d) ($\beta = .289$ for supervisor inquiry, $p < .001$; $\beta = .135$ for team inquiry, $p < .001$; $\beta = .123$, $p < .001$ for other organizational sources; and $\beta = .191$, $p < .001$ for extra-organizational sources).

Hypothesis 4b, predicting a negative relationship between empowering leadership and controlled goals was not supported ($\beta = -.055$, ns). However, hypothesis 2, predicting a negative relationship between controlled goals and feedback seeking from coworkers, peers in other departments and extra-organizational sources were partially supported. In support of hypotheses 2b and 2c, controlled goals were associated with significantly less feedback seeking from peers in other departments ($\beta = -.080$, $p < .05$) and from extra-organizational sources ($\beta = -.066$, $p < .05$). In contrast to what hypothesis 2a predicted, however, controlled goals were not related to coworker inquiry ($\beta = .053$, ns), neither were they related to supervisor inquiry ($\beta = -.011$, ns), thereby disconfirming hypothesis 3.

The results further show that, as hypothesized, empowering leadership is positively related to cooperative goals (Hypothesis 7) ($\beta = .343$, $p < .001$), which in turn influence feedback seeking from supervisors (hypothesis 6a) ($\beta = .100$, $p < .001$), coworkers (hypothesis 6b) ($\beta = .176$, $p < .001$) and other organizational sources (hypothesis 6c) ($\beta = .151$, $p < .001$). Cooperative norms were unrelated to feedback inquiry from extra-organizational sources ($\beta = .056$, ns), thereby disconfirming hypothesis 6d.

Finally, we tested whether autonomous goals and cooperative norms mediate the effects of empowering leadership on feedback seeking from supervisors and coworkers (note that we could not test for mediation for other organizational sources and extra-organizational sources given the non significant path from empowering leadership to these variables). Given that our model includes multiple mediators and multiple dependent variables, we used the approach followed by Bergami and Bagozzi (2000) to test our mediation hypotheses. Specifically, we compared two structural equation models: a model corresponding to the hypothesized model (full mediation) and the same model with direct paths added from empowering leadership to the feedback-seeking behaviors. The initial model (including the non-significant hypothesized paths too) fitted our data well ($\chi^2 = 756.97$, df = 251, $p < .05$; NNFI = .96; CFI = .97; RMSEA = .04), as did the saturated model (including the added direct paths) ($\chi^2 = 719.28$, df = 247, $p < .05$; NNFI = .97; CFI = .97; RMSEA = .04). The chi-square difference between the two models was 37.36 (df = 4) and significant, which indicates that the two models are significantly different (thereby disconfirming hypotheses 5 and 8).

Given that our mediation hypotheses were not confirmed, we also tested the indirect effects of empowering leadership on the feedback-seeking behaviors (table 3). As table 3 shows, the indirect paths from empowering leadership (via autonomous goals and cooperative norms) to all feedback-seeking behaviors were significant, except for the indirect path from empowering leadership to feedback inquiry from extra-organizational sources via cooperative norms.

Insert Table 3 About Here

In sum, the individual-level analyses provide strong support for the indirect impact of empowering leadership on feedback seeking through individuals' pursuit of autonomous goals and their perceptions of cooperative group norms.

Cross-level analyses

As stated, we also conceptualized empowering leadership and cooperative norms at the group-level. Group-level perceptions of empowering leadership were not significantly correlated with inquiry from other organizational sources. As a result, we could not test the mediation hypotheses using the criteria proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986). However, since we found a significant relationship between group-level empowering leadership and autonomous goals and between group-level empowering leadership and group-level cooperative norms, we could test the indirect effect of group-level empowering leadership on the various feedback-seeking behaviors (Kenny, Kashy and Bolger, 1998).

Table 4 presents the significant standardized coefficients for the cross-level tests.

Insert Table 4 About Here

As hypothesis 4a predicted, group-level empowering leadership directly affects goal autonomy ($\beta = .194$, $p < .001$), which in turn influences feedback seeking from the various feedback sources (Hypothesis 1a – 1d) ($\beta = .302$ for supervisor inquiry, $p < .001$; $\beta = .166$ for team inquiry, $p < .001$; $\beta = .142$, $p < .001$ for other organizational sources; and $\beta = .140$, $p < .001$ for extra-organizational sources).

Hypothesis 4b, predicting a negative relationship between group-level empowering leadership and controlled goals was not supported (β = -.03, ns). However, hypothesis 2, predicting a negative relationship between controlled goals and feedback seeking from coworkers, peers in other departments and extra-organizational sources were partially supported. In support of hypothesis 2c, controlled goals were associated with significantly less feedback seeking from peers in other departments (β = -.09, $p < .05$).

In contrast to what hypotheses 2a and 2b predicted, however, controlled goals were not related to coworker inquiry (β = .051, ns) and extra-organizational inquiry (β = -.05, ns), neither were they related to supervisor inquiry (β = -.002, ns), thereby disconfirming hypothesis 3.

The results further show that, as hypothesized, group-level empowering leadership is positively related to group-level cooperative goals (Hypothesis 7) (β = .422, $p < .001$), which in turn influence feedback seeking from supervisors (hypothesis 6a) (β = .165, $p < .001$), coworkers (hypothesis 6b) (β = .223, $p < .001$). Cooperative norms were unrelated to feedback inquiry from other organizational sources (β = .107, ns) and from extra-organizational sources (β = .134, ns), thereby disconfirming hypotheses 6c and 6d.

As stated, we could not test for mediation following the Baron and Kenny (1986), as group empowering leadership was not related to all feedback-seeking variables. Instead, we tested the indirect effects of empowering leadership via autonomous (individual) goals and cooperative (group) norms (note that we did not test the indirect effect of empowering leadership via controlled goals, as group empowering leadership was not related to controlled goals). As table 5 shows, the indirect relationships between empowering leadership and the feedback-seeking variables through autonomous (individual) goals and cooperative (group) norms were all significant, with two exceptions.

Insert Table 5 About Here

Empowering leadership did not indirectly affect subordinates' inquiry from other organizational sources and extra-organizational sources through cooperative group norms (only through autonomous individual goals).

In sum, by and large, the cross-level analyses revealed the same pattern of results that were found at the individual level. More specifically, the results show that empowering leaders influence their followers' feedback-seeking behaviors through two mechanisms: an individual mechanism (autonomous goals) and an interpersonal mechanism (cooperative norms).

DISCUSSION

The objective of this study was to untangle the intrapersonal and interpersonal mechanisms through which leaders shape the feedback-seeking behaviors of their followers. The results indicated that empowering leaders indirectly influence their followers' selection of feedback sources through the stimulation of autonomous goals and cooperative group norms.

Theoretical implications

This study extends previous research in several ways. First, our finding that empowering leadership is a strong indirect instigator of employees' selection of feedback sources is important, as previous research has narrowly focused on how leadership impacts supervisor inquiry. By showing that empowering leaders affect their followers' selection of various feedback sources, this study not only contributes to the feedback-seeking literature, but also provides indirect empirical support for Higgins and Kram's (2001) proposition that employees rely on multiple individuals for advice, guidance and feedback.

Second, whereas prior work has mainly focused on the intrapersonal mechanisms that underlie feedback-seeking behavior, this study has also revealed some of the interpersonal mechanisms that shape the feedback-seeking process. Both the leadership climate and the presence of cooperative group norms were found to be related to employees' selection of (mainly intra-organizational) feedback sources. This is important, as prior work has tended to neglect the situational/interpersonal factors affecting feedback seeking (Ashford et al., 2003). Surprisingly, however, individuals' perceptions of cooperative group norms were not related to feedback seeking from extra-organizational sources, nor were group-level beliefs of group norms related to inquiry from other organizational sources and extra-organizational sources. We do not know why these hypotheses were not supported, but it may be that our self-developed scale of cooperative norms only captured norms regarding cooperation within the organization (or team) and did not sufficiently assess norms regarding cooperation with others in general (e.g. with extra-organizational sources).

Our finding that empowering leadership nurtures the development of cooperative group norms has important implications for the literature on the formation of group norms as well. Within this literature, the role of leaders in nurturing group norms has been widely stipulated (e.g. Feldman, 1984; Taggar & Ellis, 2007), but not tested (Taggar & Ellis, 2007). Our study is one of the first to demonstrate the impact that leaders have on the development of group norms within an organizational context.

Third, our finding that supervisors encourage their followers to seek feedback from multiple sources within and outside their organization through the intrapersonal mechanism of goal autonomy supports Grant and Ashford's (2007) suggestions that proactive behavior is more likely to occur in situations that stimulate autonomy. Contrary to what we expected, however, empowering leaders did not discourage employees' controlled goal pursuit (neither did they encourage it). Though unexpected, this finding is consistent with Bono and Judge (2003), who found no relationship between transformational leadership and controlled motivation. It may be that other organizational processes, such as formal reward systems, swamp the effects that leaders have on their followers' controlled goal pursuit (Ryan, 2000).

Finally, this study also contributes to the development of the proactivity literature in general. Rather than focusing on the domain-specific mechanisms that underlie the feedback-seeking process (e.g. motives underlying feedback seeking, the perceived costs and benefits of feedback seeking and situational norms pertaining to feedback seeking), we focused on general intrapersonal and interpersonal mechanisms that might govern other proactive behaviors as well. For example, our focus on cooperative norms rather than on feedback-seeking norms and on autonomous goals rather than on specific reasons for feedback seeking allows for what Grant and Ashford (2007) refer to as "lumping" across literatures.

Managerial Contributions

Our study provides some important insights for management practice as well. First, from an organizational and team-perspective, our results highlight that it is possible to develop work contexts that encourage employees to seek feedback and ask their supervisors, coworkers and other relevant sources for advice and guidance. For example, organizations might successfully implement management development programs aimed at developing an empowering leadership style among their managers. Training non-empowering leaders to lead by example, show concern, involve their employees in decision-making, inform and coach their subordinates, may help them to foster a climate in which cooperation becomes the norm.

These norms are not only important in stimulating cooperative behaviors and feedback seeking, but also in enhancing team effectiveness (Srivastava et al., 2006). In the same vein, organizations may also find it useful to focus on an empowering leadership style in leader selection.

Second, our results indicate that cooperative norms are important in stimulating informal feedback processes within the organization (feedback seeking from supervisors, coworkers and other organizational sources). Empowering leadership is one way to promote these norms, but as shown by Wageman (1995), cooperative norms can also be encouraged through other work characteristics, such as task definition at the group level, group-level reward systems, etc.

Finally, paying attention to goal autonomy may also be valuable for organizations, as our results indicate that goal autonomy leads to the consultation of the widest variety of feedback sources. As suggested in the creativity literature (e.g. Ekvall, 1996; Martin, Allwood, & Hemlin, 2004; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Zhou, 2003), individuals' network variety may result in enhanced creativity. Through their leadership style, supervisors may promote goal autonomy, but other characteristics of the work context, such as communication systems, may support goal autonomy as well (Gagné et al., 2005).

Limitations and avenues for future research

As with all studies, there are also a number of limitations to be addressed. First, all data were collected using a survey methodology, so common-method biases may have confounded our results (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). However, by using a multilevel research design, including both individual-level as group-level variables, we have dealt with consistency issues that would have emerged if we had only explored individual-level dynamics. In addition, most of our findings are consistent with laboratory studies exploring the links between leadership, goals, norms and feedback-seeking behaviors (e.g. Ashford et al., 1992; Butler, 1993; Levy et al., 2002).

Second, given our focus on knowledge workers, there is the potential risk of sample homogeneity, which limits the generalizability of our results. However, as noted by VandeWalle et al. (2002), this should result in a more conservative test of the hypotheses, as the variance of our variables can be restricted.

Some of the relationships we found may also be reverse-ordered. For example, it may be that empowering leaders do not promote individual goal autonomy, but that goal autonomy of employees leads to empowering leader behaviors. In contrast, if employees are disinterested, managers may choose a leadership style that focuses on manager control, rather than on self-direction (Srivastava et al., 2006). Given the cross-sectional character of our study, we were not able to test this hypothesis. Longitudinal research designs may overcome this limitation of our study.

Further, though most cross-level dynamics were similar to the patterns of results we found at the individual level, there were some inconsistencies as well. For example, our individual-level tests indicated that through cooperative norms, empowering leaders influenced subordinates' tendency to seek feedback from supervisors, coworkers and other organizational sources, but not from extra-organizational sources; while at the group-level, empowering leaders indirectly influenced supervisor inquiry and coworker inquiry, but not inquiry from other organizational sources and extra-organizational sources. We do not know why the results we found at the group-level differed from those at the individual level, but our sample for the cross-level analyses was relatively small (n = 185), which makes it more difficult to find statistically significant relationships.

We also wish to point out that it is not only important to assess how goals and group norms shape feedback-seeking patterns, but also how they shape the outcomes of feedback seeking. For example, it could be that individuals with autonomous goals are more likely to use the feedback they sought to improve their performance. Along these lines, group norms may shape how feedback-seeking acts are evaluated by others, which in turn may shape general appraisals of feedback seekers (Chau, Dahling, Swee, & Levy, under review; Lam, Huang, & Snape, 2007).

The present study also does not provide insight in the outcomes of feedback seeking from various sources. Though prior work suggests that feedback seeking has a positive impact on important employee outcomes (Ashford et al., 2003), this does not necessarily imply that seeking feedback from a wide variety of feedback sources is equally beneficial. Grant and Ashford (2007) suggested that employees who seek feedback indiscriminately (e.g. from a wide variety of feedback sources) may pick up a lot of irrelevant information. Future research should therefore explore how employees' variety in feedback sources affects employee performance.

Finally, this study only focused on social sources of feedback-seeking. We note, however, that employees may also seek feedback from impersonal feedback sources (e.g. documents). Similarly, another source of feedback may be the "self" (Ashford et al., 1981). That is, individuals may not only track their goal progress through feedback seeking from others, but also by self-appraisal. Campbell and Lee (1988) posited that the motivation underlying self-appraisal is purely intrinsic (i.e. autonomous), while feedback-seeking research shows that the motivation underlying feedback seeking is both intrinsic and extrinsic (Ashford et al., 2003). This suggests that individuals with autonomous goals may engage even more in self-appraisal than in feedback seeking from others. This is also what Theodore Roosevelt suggested with the following quote: *"I care not what others think of what I do, but I care very much about what I think of what I do"*. While a somewhat different picture seems to emerge from our results (i.e. intrinsically motivated individuals do seem to care about feedback), this proposition offers intriguing avenues for future research.

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FIGURE 1:

Conceptual Model

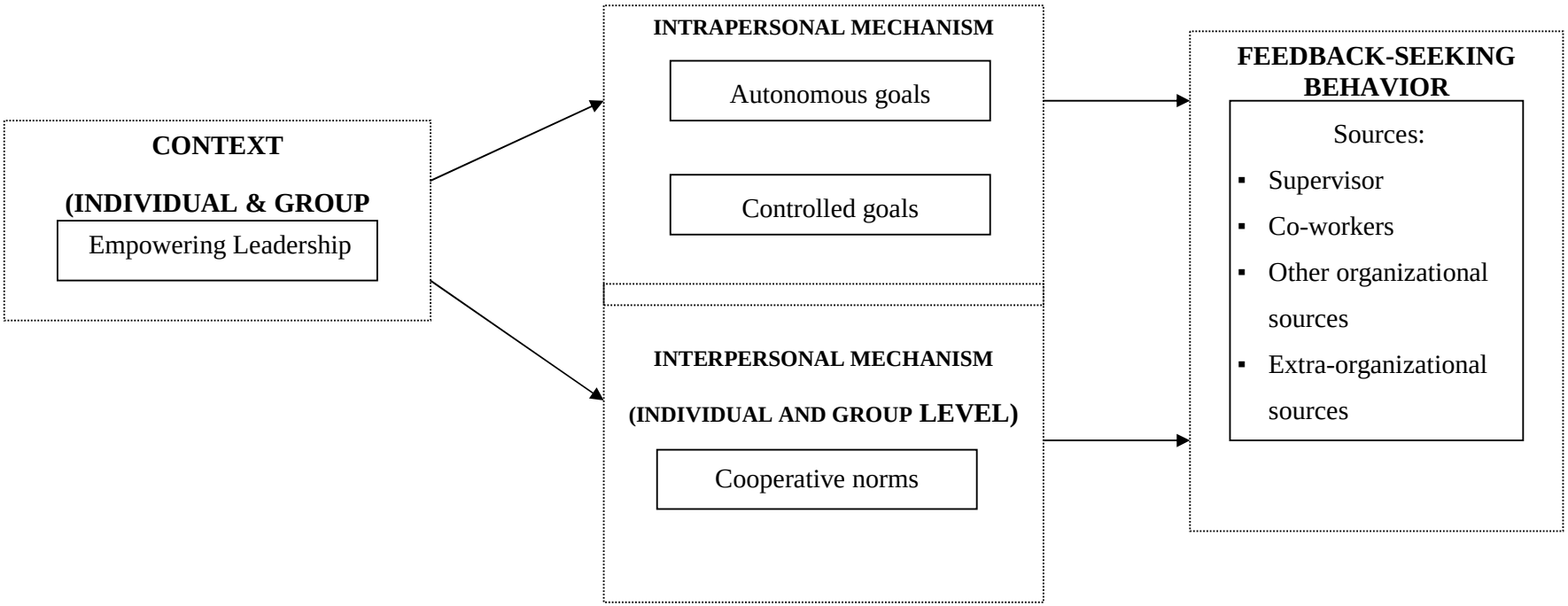

TABLE 1

Means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations for hypothesis testing:

			1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	Mean	SD								
Individual level										
1) Empowering leadership (individual level)	3.79	.61	(.93)							
2) Autonomous goals	3.93	.66	.249**	(.69)						
3) Controlled goals	3.12	.83	-.044	-.027	(.80)					
4) Cooperative norms (individual level)	3.60	.74	.289**	.246**	-.050	(.85)				
5) Inquiry Supervisor	2.99	.94	.237**	.231**	-.026	.135**	(.86)			
6) Inquiry Team Members	3.03	.87	.152**	.151**	.031	.189**	.306**	(.89)		
7) Inquiry Other Org. Members	2.32	.87	.035	.117**	-.08*	.143**	.237**	.304**	(.82)	
8) Inquiry External Sources	2.32	.95	.048	.156**	-.09*	.093**	.181**	.259**	.298**	(.82)
Cross level										
1) Empowering leadership (group level)	3.85	.44	1							
2) Autonomous goals (individual)	3.93	.66	.124**	1						
3) Controlled goals (individual)	3.12	.83	-.018	-.027	1					
4) Cooperative norms (group level)	3.60	.74	.388**	.121**	.018	1				
5) Inquiry Supervisor (individual)	2.99	.94	.187**	.231**	-.026	.113**	1			
6) Inquiry Team Members (individual)	3.03	.87	.138**	.151**	.031	.132**	.306**	1		
7) Inquiry Other Org. Members (individual)	2.32	.87	.045	.117**	-.08*	.031	.237**	.304**	1	
8) Inquiry External Sources (individual)	2.32	.95	.117**	.156**	-.09*	.09*	.181**	.259**	.298**	1

Note:
The diagonal values (between brackets) represent the alpha-reliability coefficients.
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level, two-tailed.
*. Correlation is significant at the .05 level, two-tailed.

TABLE 2

Individual-level analyses

	Empowering Leadership	Autonomous Goals	Controlled Goals	Cooperative Norms	Job Tenure (Months in position)
Individual-level tests	β	β	β	β	β
Step 1: Linking the Independent variables to the Dependent Variables[a]					
Supervisor Inquiry	.353**	.289**	-.011	.100**	
Team Member Inquiry	.201**	.135**	.053	.176**	
Inquiry Other Organizational Sources	.058	.123**	-.080*	.151**	
Inquiry Extra-Organizational Sources	.061	.191**	-.066*	.056	
Step 2: Linking Individual-Level Empowering Leadership to the Mediators					
Autonomous Goals	.263**				.027
Controlled Goals	-.055				-.031*
Cooperative Norms (individual – level)	.343**				-.040*
Step 3: Linking the independent variables & mediators to the dependent Variables[b]					
Supervisor Inquiry	.276**	.241**	-.006	.038	-.064**
Team Member Inquiry	.122*	.114**	.055	.152**	-.081**
Inquiry Other Organizational Sources	-.035	.129**	-.080*	.157**	.053*
Inquiry Extra-Organizational Sources	-.015	.193**	-.090*	.059	-.067**

Note:

a. a. For each of the feedback-seeking variables, two separate HLM analyses were conducted: one with empowering leadership as the independent variable and one with autonomous goals, controlled goals and cooperative norms as the independent variables

b. Mediation analyses for other organizational sources and extra-organizational sources were not possible, as empowering leadership was not related to these variables

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

TABLE 3

Test of Individual-level indirect effects

	Indirect Effect	z
Individual-level indirect paths		
Empowering Leadership → Autonomous Goals → Supervisor Inquiry	.08	5.43*
Empowering Leadership → Autonomous Goals → Team Member Inquiry	.04	3.12*
Empowering Leadership → Autonomous Goals → Inquiry Other Organizational Sources	.03	2.88*
Empowering Leadership → Autonomous Goals → Inquiry Extra-Organizational Sources	.05	3.77*
Empowering Leadership → Cooperative Norms → Supervisor Inquiry	.03	2.42*
Empowering Leadership → Cooperative Norms → Team Member Inquiry	.06	4.26*
Empowering Leadership → Cooperative Norms → Inquiry Other Organizational Sources	.05	3.75*
Empowering Leadership → Cooperative Norms → Inquiry Extra-Organizational Sources[a]	.02	1.39

Note:

a. This was a 'redundant' test, since the path from cooperative norms to inquiry from extra-organizational sources was not significant

*. $p < .05$

TABLE 4

Cross-level analyses

	Empowering Leadership (group)	Autonomous Goals (individual)	Controlled Goals (individual)	Cooperative Norms (group)	Job Tenure (individual)
Cross-level tests	β	β	β	β	β
Step 1: Linking the Independent variables to the Dependent Variables[a]					
Supervisor Inquiry	.394**	.302**	-.002	.165*	
Team Member Inquiry	.277**	.166**	.051	.223**	
Inquiry Other Organizational Sources	.133	.142**	-.09*	.107	
Inquiry Extra-Organizational Sources	.205	.140**	-.05	.134	
Step 2: Linking Group-Level Empowering Leadership to the Mediators					
Autonomous Goals	.194**				-.028*
Controlled Goals	-.03				.021
Cooperative Norms (group – level) [b]	.422**				-.019
Step 3: Linking the independent variables & mediators to the dependent Variables					
Supervisor Inquiry	.323**	.288**	.01	.045	-.065*
Team Member Inquiry	.178**	.160**	.039	.159*	-.09*
Inquiry Other Organizational Sources	.066	.140**	-.08	.086	.044*
Inquiry Extra-Organizational Sources	.136	.136**	-.04	.086	-.033

Note:

a. For each of the feedback-seeking variables, two separate HLM analyses were conducted: one with empowering leadership as the independent variable and one with autonomous goals, controlled goals and cooperative norms as the independent variables; Job tenure was always included as the control variable

b. This analyses was done using linear regression

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

TABLE 5

Test of Cross-level indirect effects

	Indirect Effect	z
Cross-level indirect paths		
Empowering Leadership Climate → Autonomous Goals → Supervisor Inquiry	.06	2.48*
Empowering Leadership Climate → Autonomous Goals → Team Member Inquiry	.03	2.21*
Empowering Leadership Climate → Autonomous Goals → Inquiry Other Organizational Sources	.03	2.26*
Empowering Leadership Climate → Autonomous Goals → Inquiry Extra-Organizational Sources	.03	2.10*
Empowering Leadership Climate → Cooperative Group Norms → Supervisor Inquiry	.07	2.08*
Empowering Leadership Climate → Cooperative Group Norms → Team Member Inquiry	.09	2.71*
Empowering Leadership Climate → Cooperative Group Norms → Inquiry Other Organizational Sources	.05	1.24
Empowering Leadership Climate → Cooperative Group Norms → Inquiry Extra-Organizational Sources	.06	1.33

*. $p < .05$