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Do community citizenship behaviors by leaders enhance team performance?

Evidence from the “field”

Abstract

Due to minimal available findings, Rodell (2016) put out a call for more research on the performance outcomes of community-focused behaviors such as volunteering while acknowledging the challenge of connecting “social movements to hard data” (p.79). This study answers that call by evaluating the community citizenship behaviors (CCBs) of leaders and the potential influence on team performance. Based on existing theory and findings, this study argues that leaders who engage in CCB are likely to enhance their leadership skills, inspire their followers and produce prosocial contagion and as a result we hypothesize they will increase their team performance. Using a sample of National Football League teams and players, the findings presented here support the hypothesis suggesting that investments in local communities produce a positive outcome for the community, the leader, and even the leader’s team performance.

Introduction

Individual investment in local communities may include volunteering for a charity, donating personal funds to local food drives, and even helping strangers. These types of community-minded endeavors are often enacted from a sense of civic duty and prosocial motivation (Liu, Zahn, & Hu, 2015). But while the target of these initiatives (i.e., local community members) may be the focus, research has found additional beneficiaries to community citizenship behavior (CCB). For example, volunteering produces benefits for the individual who engages in such behavior through an enhanced sense of purpose, well-being, and belonging (Mojza et al., 2011; Mojza & Sonnentag, 2010), skill development (Booth et al., 2009; Caligiuri et al., 2013) and even job performance (de Gilder et al., 2005; Jones, 2010; Rodell, 2013). In addition, athlete citizenship (i.e., community stakeholder engagement) has been connected to reputation, brand enhancement, and even revenue-generating ventures (Agyemang, 2014). Finally, some research even finds that when employees engage in CCB, their organization benefits through positive reputation (Jones et al., 2014) and financial performance (Lewin & Sabater, 1996).

While the connection between CCB and performance is an interesting result, this vein of research is quite limited. In fact, as a result of minimal available findings, Rodell (2016) puts out a call for more research on the performance outcomes of community-focused behaviors while acknowledging the challenge of connecting “social movements to hard data” (Rodell, 2016; p. 79; Koschmann, Kuhn, & Pfarrer, 2012). While a limited number of studies have evaluated performance outcomes of CCB (Jones et al., 2014; Lewin & Sabater, 1996), none have evaluated the outcomes for the CCB of leadership. This stands as a significant gap in

our understanding as prior research demonstrates that leadership characteristics and behaviors have significant impacts on performance (Hambrick & Mason, 1984; Slater & Dixon-Fowler, 2009; Soane *et al.*, 2015). As such, this study will answer Rodell's call by examining the team performance implications for the CCB of leaders.

The theory and findings presented here will contribute to existing knowledge in several ways. First, the findings will expand understanding of CCB and its implications for performance. However, where previous studies have evaluated outcomes for CCBs of employees, this study will specially look at the CCB of leaders. Second, an expanded understanding of the antecedents to enhanced performance may provide additional insights for managers and scholars of performance outcomes. Third, this study will contribute to our understanding of leadership resulting in implications for leadership selection and development as organizations may want to include CCB in their selection criteria and training programs.

Background & Theory

Community Citizenship Behaviors

CCB “captures an individual's positive behaviors directed toward the wider groups in the community” (Eva *et al.*, 2020; p. 637). These positive behaviors include respect for the local processes and laws, adopting community values and serving their interests through volunteering and/or philanthropy for the common good, and active involvement in community self-governance (Van Dyn *et al.*, 1994). CCB is driven by prosocial motivation which refers to the desire to benefits others (Grant & Berg, 2011). Those high on prosocial motivation place value on promoting the common good and well-being of others and thus are more likely to engage in CCB (Eva *et al.*, 2020). These sentiments are also echoed in research on government employees and their Public Service Motivation referring to the motivation of government employees to serve their community and country (Liu *et al.*, 2015). In fact, scholars have noted that private employees with high public service motivation will look for ways to invest in their communities beyond the workplace in order to bring their motivation and employment status in a private firm into congruence (Steen, 2008). In other words, “private employees adapt their altruism and sense of civic duty by finding ways to pursue other-focused behaviors outside their work environment” (Liu *et al.*, 2015; p. 268). Thus, our understanding of CCB is connected with public service motivation through prosocial motivation and community-focused behaviors.

The prosocial motivation of CCB is also found within other domains of related research such as volunteering, organizational citizenship behaviors (OCB), and servant leadership. However, CCB is also distinct from each of these literature streams in different ways. Compared with volunteering, CCBs are a larger domain including philanthropy, adopting community values, respect for local processes and laws, and involvement in community self-governance (Van Dyn *et al.*, 1994). Similarly, OCBs and CCBs are prosocial behaviors for the benefit of others but it's the target recipient that differs. OCBs focus on citizenship toward co-workers and the employing organization (Organ, 1988) where CCBs are directed towards communities outside the employing organization. Finally, where servant leadership is primarily focused on the leader's subordinates (Eva *et al.*, 2019), CCB is exclusively focused on members of the local community.

Finally, CCB also has some roots in corporate social responsibility (CSR). CSR “involves the conduct of a business so that it is economically profitable, law abiding, ethical and socially

supportive... Thus, CSR is composed of four parts: economic, legal, ethical and voluntary or philanthropic” (Carroll, 1983, p. 604). Both CCB and CSR are focused on investment in others beyond self-gain. CSR is often studied by evaluating the many stakeholders influenced by a firm’s operation. In fact, in multidimensional studies, one of the primary stakeholder groups considered are local communities (Roach & Slater, 2016). Thus, CCB and CSR both look to benefit local communities. However, they differ in that CSR is formally sanctioned and implemented by the organization often with employees as participants or donors. Contrastingly, CCB may or may not be a part of the organizations CSR efforts. This distinction has been noted as internal (activities supported by the organization) vs external (voluntary activities outside the employing organization) CCB (Eva *et al.*, 2020). In the case of external CCB, they would not be considered CSR. In addition, CCBs are focused exclusively on the community whereas CSR is much more broad encompassing additional stakeholders such as customers, employees, buyers, and suppliers. Finally, CSR is also a corporate aggregate of a company’s societal actions and impacts whereas CCB is an individual behavior.

Leadership CCB & Team Performance

Existing research has consistently demonstrated the effects that leadership characteristics and behaviors have on organizational performance outcomes (Wang *et al.*, 2016). Upper echelons theory (Hambrick & Mason, 1984) provides a particularly relevant and established framework for these findings. Based on bounded rationality (March & Simon, 1958), upper echelons theory suggests that leaders are unable to make perfectly rational decisions due to their own limitations in cognitive capacity and personal bias. As a result, leaders often make decisions which reflect their own personal values, background, training, etc. These decisions in turn impact those they lead and ultimately the performance of their subordinates and organizations (Soane *et al.*, 2015; Wang *et al.*, 2016). In the same vein, this research will focus on leaders who exhibit CCB and how that behavior may influence team performance. As will be argued below, existing research suggests three potential ways in which team performance may be impacted by leadership CCB: skill development; inspired followers; and prosocial contagion.

Leaders who engage in CCB may enhance their leadership skill sets. For example, by engaging in volunteer work in the community, leaders develop and hone skills which are transferable to their leadership roles such as communication, interpersonal skills, and active listening (Booth *et al.*, 2009; Caligiuri *et al.*, 2013; Mojza *et al.*, 2011; Tuffrey, 1997). Beyond a side benefit, Caudron (1994) even suggests that volunteering could be viewed as a “low cost training option” (p. 38) for leadership development. Thus, leaders who engage in CCB may enhance their leadership skillset making them more effective leaders and enhancing their team performance as a result.

Leaders engaging in CCB are also likely to inspire a greater response and effort from their followers through enhanced credibility and trust as evidenced by servant leadership research. Follower trust is built through servant leadership “as a result of the subordinate finding the leader’s judgments and actions to be thoughtful, dependable, and moral” (Liden *et al.*, 2008 p.163). Furthermore, evidence suggests that servant leadership results in increased performance across levels within the organization (Liden *et al.*, 2008, Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2016 & Choudhary, Akhtar, & Zaheer, 2013) including team effectiveness (Irving & Longbotham, 2007). Leaders who engage in CCB may find that their role model

behaviors provide enhanced trust and credibility with their followers which inspires greater follower performance.

Credible leaders may also enhance their followers' prosocial motivation, suggesting that CCBs may produce a contagious prosocial effect. Social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) suggests that when subordinates believe their leaders to be credible role models, they will seek to emulate their attitudes, values, and behaviors. Rather than solely being concerned with their own roles, followers may begin to place focus on each other (Grant & Berg, 2011). In fact, evidence indicates that servant leadership increases OCBs (Hu & Liden, 2011; Hunter *et al.*, 2013) suggesting that prosocial leadership produces prosocial behaviors. Thus, if prosocial motivation is contagious then a leader engaged in CCB may produce followers who also engage in prosocial behaviors such as OCB, which ultimately increase group and organization performance (Mohamed & Anisa, 2014).

Drawing on literature from servant leadership, volunteering, social learning theory, and upper echelons theory, we have argued that leaders who engage in CCBs are likely to have a positive impact on team performance through skill development, inspired followers, and prosocial contagion. Based on these arguments, the following hypothesis is offered.

H1: Leaders engaged in community citizenship behaviors will be positively associated with team performance.

Methods

Sample

The National Football League (NFL) in the United States was the source for data collection in this study. NFL players and teams from 2015-2019 were utilized as the sample for this research with most of the data collection coming directly from the NFL database accessed through its website, nfl.com (team captain data was accessed through other sources which will be discussed below). 32 teams in the league spanning 5 years of data collection yielded a gross sample size of 160 but after accounting for missing and unusable data, the final sample was 133.

Measures

Leadership CCB

"The Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year Award" recognizes an NFL player for his excellence on and off the field. The award was established in 1970. It was renamed in 1999 after the late Hall of Fame Chicago Bears' running back, Walter Payton. Each team nominates one player who has had a significant positive impact on his community" (nfl.com⁴). For example, the 2019 winner, Calais Campbell, established the CRC foundation and donated thousands based on his on-field performance (e.g., \$1000 for a team win; \$10,000 for a turnover). In addition to distributing funds to multiple community charities, Calais and the CRC foundation also help young people to develop creative, financial, and vocational skills through camps and various programs. Calais also hosts an annual shopping spree for local kids who have completed lessons in financial literacy. He volunteers at the local Ronald McDonald House, donates meals during Thanksgiving to local families in need, hosts football and STEM camps for the local community including a Microsoft-equipped coding camp for kids of Northeast Florida, and regularly visits local schools and colleges to encourage reading and discussions

on social justice (nfl.com²). The combination of volunteering and philanthropy is consistent amongst the nominees which is in keeping with the components of CCB (Eva *et al.*, 2020).

Each team also selects up to 6 players of its 53-man roster to serve as Team Captains each year. Some teams appoint their captains by the coach and others allow the players to vote (Farmer, 2018). The Team Captain designation comes with a “C” patch to be worn on the jersey and those players are viewed as leaders and ambassadors for the team (Farmer, 2018). The Team Captains represent the team at the coin toss at the beginning of the game and serve as a significant source of leadership for the players. Team Captains are often the connection point between coaches and other players serving to bring player concerns to coaches, providing verbal encouragement and motivational speeches and even addressing “locker-room drama” (Darlington, 2012). Being a good player is not enough for a team captain role. Quarterback Chad Pennington put it this way, “Just because you’re a good player, it doesn’t mean you’re a captain. Some guys just don’t handle that role well. They’re the type of people that have to be so focused on themselves that they can’t take focus off of that and put it on the team” (Darlington, 2012). Pennington goes on to say that team captains must “win their (players) trust” in order for players to follow their leadership. Noting the significant role that team captains play, Darlington credits New Orleans 2012 success largely to the long-time Captain Drew Brees’s leadership while its coach was suspended for the entire season. He states that Brees’s leadership “might be the biggest reason that coach Sean Payton’s season-long suspension hasn’t crippled the team” (Darlington, 2018). Darlington sums up the role of team captains like this: “Whether a captain must carry an entire organization on his back or simply quell the occasional locker-room drama, some players would argue there’s no one more important to a team’s ultimate success.” While decades ago, it might have been more challenging to identify leaders on a team but today to identify a leader “just look for the patch” (Darlington, 2018).

Team captain data was gathered through internet searches for announcements on team websites and local and national sports news outlets reporting on team captain selections. 11 cases were eliminated from this study as a result of being unable to obtain team captain data through internet searches. An additional 19 cases were eliminated due to their team captain selections rotating on a weekly basis throughout the season. The nature of these weekly rotations was not in keeping with the majority which selected team captains on a season-long basis and thus did not make for sound comparison to the majority of the sample.

The measure for leadership CCB was coded as a dummy variable indicating whether one of the team captains was also their team’s Walter Payton nominee (1) or not (0). Of the 133 observations in this sample, there were 74 cases (55.6%) where the Walter Payton nominee was a team captain and 59 cases (44.4%) where he was not a team captain. Thus, 55.6% of teams have a leader (i.e., team captain) who is formally recognized as a significant contributor to local communities (i.e., Walter Payton Man of the Year nominee) and 44.4% of teams do not.

Team Performance

Team performance was measured as regular season win/loss percentage and data was gathered from the NFL website. Each team plays 16 games per season allowing for even comparisons between teams. Playoff wins or win percentage could also be a relevant reflection of team performance but does not allow for equal comparison as the majority of teams do not advance to the playoffs (only the top 12 of 32 teams advance each year).

Prior Team Performance

Each team's performance for the prior year was used as a control variable. Prior performance was measured as each team's win percentage from the previous year.

Team Tenure

Each Walter Payton Nominee's tenure on the team was also included as a control variable. Tenure was measured as the number of years the player was on his current team roster. In several cases, the nominee had played for the same team at two separate periods of time (usually playing for a different team in between periods). In these cases, only the players' current stint with the team was counted toward their team tenure.

Analysis & Results

Means, standard deviations, and correlations for each variable are presented in *Table I*.

Table I: Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3
1. Leadership CCB	.56	.50			
2. Team Tenure	5.25	2.96	.26		
3. Prior Team Performance	.50	.19	.00	.23	
4. Team Performance	.50	.19	.22	.25	.34

$n = 133$

As a preliminary evaluation of *H1*, leadership CCB and team performance are positively correlated ($.22$; $p = .012$) providing initial support for a positive association. ANCOVA was chosen as the formal hypothesis test due to the categorical nature of the independent variable (Leadership CCB) and the necessity to include control variables (Team Tenure and Prior Team Performance). The results of the ANCOVA found in *Table II* demonstrate that Leadership CCB was significantly associated with Team Performance ($F = 4.882$; $p = .029$) after controlling for the player's Team Tenure ($F = 2.352$; $p = .128$) and Prior Team Performance ($F = 16.045$; $p = .000$). Thus, *H1* is supported.

Table II: ANCOVA Results for Team Performance (*H1*)

Variable	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
Team Tenure	2.352	.128	.018
Prior Team Performance	16.045	.000	.111
Leadership CCB	4.882	.029	.036

$R^2 = .189$

Adjusted $R^2 = .170$

Discussion

Contributions and Implications

Drawing from multiple streams of literature, this study has argued that leaders who engage in CCB will enhance their teams' performance. The findings support that hypothesis even after accounting for prior team performance and the leader's tenure. Where prior research has

primarily focused on the antecedents or individual level outcomes of CCB, this study provided some clarity on higher level performance outcomes. In addition, this study stands as unique by specifically examining the CCBs of leadership. As such, the findings here help to respond to Rodell's (2016) challenge to examine CCB outcomes in spite of the challenges in connecting "social movements to hard data" (Rodell, 2016; 79; Koschmann, Kuhn, & Pfarrer 2012). By using a sample of NFL teams and players, the presented findings indeed produce a connection between the hard data of team performance (win percentage) and the social initiatives of the players.

The results of this study provide several contributions and implications. The team level outcome for CCB is unique implying the strong nature of multi-level affects for CCB. Prior research has evaluated individual level outcomes and a few organization level outcomes but now we can also add team level outcomes to mix. The findings could also have implications for servant leadership and volunteering literature. While we did not measure either explicitly, the CCB construct does have overlap with both. Thus, the findings here would at least provide some additional support to servant leadership and volunteering outcomes within organizations. The findings here also correspond to research in the CSR literature on the association between societal initiatives and organizational performance (Dixon-Fowler *et al.*, 2013; Orlitzky, Schmidt, & Rynes, 2003). This literature largely supports the notion that all parties can win—the employees, the shareholders, and society. Similarly, the findings here suggest that the leader, the team and the local community all benefit when leaders engage in CCBs. Finally, this study also supports the notion that athlete citizenship (Agyemang, 2014) provides benefits to the athlete themselves but also extends to the team level.

The findings also have implications for management practice, especially for leadership selection, training, and development. If the findings here generalize to other leaders and teams, then CCBs could be an important selection criterion. Hiring managers could evaluate a candidate's history of engagement in their local community as a legitimate performance enhancing factor. Preference may be given to candidates who have a greater history investing in their community which would create incentive for aspiring managers to do the same, thus spurring even more community enrichment. Beyond selection, organizations may also use this finding in their training and development of leaders. As leaders are groomed and developed, organizations may include requirements around community service hours or charitable activity as a means of developing their skills (Booth *et al.*, 2009; Caligiuri *et al.*, 2013; Mojza *et al.*, 2011; Tuffrey, 1997), building trust with their followers (Liden *et al.*, 2008), and fueling follower prosocial activity (Bandura, 1977; Grant & Berg, 2011).

Limitations and Future Research

The nature of the sample here is unique. While the results support the principle, the question could be asked as to whether the same result would be found with other leaders in more traditional work teams. Perhaps the public nature of these leaders skews their CCBs in a positive direction due to social pressure that may not be found with less public figures. It could also be that the emotional nature of athletic competition allows for the effects of inspired followers to a greater degree. These and other differences could be found in future research using different samples to evaluate the generalizability of the result presented here.

The measure of CCB is also unique. Previous research has primarily used survey measures of CCB (Eva *et al.*, 2020) which have the benefit of psychometric validity but also some

drawbacks. Where survey measures may suffer from social desirability bias on the part of the survey taker, the measure used here is assessed by an external third party (which may have its own bias but not by the recipient). Thus, future research may want to confirm the findings here using other, more traditional measures of CCB.

This study also makes several arguments and assumptions which are not examined. For example, it was argued that the causal mechanisms for the association between leadership CCB and team performance are skill development, inspired followers, and prosocial contagion. However, these explanatory mechanisms are not measured and perhaps future scholars may explore that terrain. In addition, CCB is founded on the idea of prosocial motivation (Grant & Berg, 2011) but there are other possibilities. For example, perhaps these leaders engaged in CCB for image reasons (Podsakoff et al., 2011) or for other external rewards (Hui, Lam, & Law, 2000). Perhaps future research can explore various outcomes depending on the motivation for engaging in CCB.

As discussed above, the findings of this study support and fill some gaps in existing knowledge across multiple streams of research but also provoke additional questions which could be explored. For example, is the effect on team performance different for internal vs external CCBs (Eva et al., 2020)? Internal CCBs may be more visible to followers so perhaps the magnitude of affect is larger. In addition, can we measure the assumed benefit of CCB to the community? If so, we could explore the nuances of the effects on the community when followers verses leaders (or both) engage in CCB. The findings here could also be explored on organizational culture. Does a leader's enhanced effectiveness through CCB encourage the same in other organizational leaders resulting in a community-minded culture? Indeed, the field of research in this domain is ripe for harvest with implications and beneficiaries across all spectrums of society.

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