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**Title:** Leadership Style and Teaching Orientation of Pastors of Solo-Pastor SBC Churches

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of this descriptive research was to analyze the relationship between the leadership style and teaching orientation of a random sample of pastors of solo-pastor churches in the SBC. Utilizing a one-phase, quantitative, correlational model, 176 solo-pastors and 608 church members were surveyed to determine whether leadership style and teaching orientation were dependent variables, independent variables, or just related characteristics of individuals who practice both leadership and teaching. In order to identify a potential relationship between these dimensions at the most basic level, two leadership styles (autocratic and democratic) and two teaching orientations (pedagogical and andragogical) were utilized.

While this research found that a perceived change in one dimension (either leadership style or teaching orientation) did correlate to some measurable perceived change in the other dimension, the researcher concluded that leadership and teaching were largely complementary competencies, not strictly corollary; meaning, the relationship between leadership and teaching was best expressed in quadrants, not on a continuum. These findings offer limited support for two theoretical models: Situational Leadership Theory (Hersey and Blanchard 1995; Hersey et al. 2001) and Staged Self-Directed Learning (Grow 1991). Additionally, based on the findings a theoretic model of Cross-Perceptual Teaching is proposed in this study.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this research was to analyze the relationship between the leadership style and teaching orientation of a random sample of pastors of solo-pastor churches in the SBC.

### **Delimitations of the Study**

This study was delimited to male pastors of solo-pastor churches in the SBC. Furthermore, this study was delimited to studying two leadership styles: autocratic and democratic. Finally, this study was delimited to studying two teaching orientations: pedagogical and andragogical.

### **Research Questions**

The following four questions were dealt with in this study:

1. To what degree, if any, are the perceptions of leadership style and teaching orientation of pastors significantly related to demographic variables of pastors and congregational members?
2. To what extent are pastors who are identified as being congruent in their leadership style also identified as being congruent in their teaching orientation?

3. To what extent are pastors who are identified as congruent leaders or congruent leaders/teachers associated with andragogical or pedagogical teaching orientation?
4. To what extent are pastors who are identified as congruent teachers or congruent leaders/teachers associated with autocratic or democratic leadership style?

### **Research Assumptions**

The following research assumptions were foundational to this study:

1. It was assumed the work of Lewin, Lippitt, and White accurately identified autocratic and democratic leadership styles (Lewin et al. 1939).
2. It was assumed that andragogy and pedagogy accurately reflect two separate teaching orientations, as identified by Malcolm Knowles (Knowles 1980; Knowles 1984b).
3. It was assumed that respondents—pastors and congregational members—had the ability to correctly assess the leadership style and teaching orientation of pastors.
4. It was assumed the Annual Church Profile (ACP) records collected and tabulated by *LifeWay Research* accurately reflect the pastoral, congregational, and demographic status of SBC churches.

### **Procedural Overview**

This research was descriptive in nature. This research used a one-phase, quantitative, correlational study model (Gall et al. 2005; Leedy and Ormrod 2005). The aim of this study was to collect data pertaining to both pastors' and congregational members' perceptions of pastoral leadership style and teaching orientation, in order to better understand the extent of the relationship between the orientations examined herein.

Simple random sampling was used to select participants for this study from the data of solo-pastors of SBC churches, as recorded in the 2009 Annual Church Profile (ACP) records collected and tabulated by LifeWay Research, an entity of the SBC.

Prior to conducting this study, all necessary and appropriate permissions required to conduct this research were secured. Written permission was obtained from Molero to use the ADLS to measure leadership style, and from Mattia to use the RBL&TOQ to measure teacher orientation. Permission was also granted to change the language of these scales to better fit a church-based context and to put the items extracted from these instruments into a digital, online survey format. Additionally, written authorization was obtained from LifeWay Research to use the information supplied to the researcher from LifeWay as a means to contact potential study participants.

Once the list of solo-pastors was obtained from LifeWay Research, all necessary permissions were granted, and approval for this study was obtained from both the Dissertation Committee and Research Ethics Committee of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, personalized contact was made with pastors from the sample inviting them to participate in the study. Correspondence—both digital and hard copy (as needed and appropriate)—were sent to the sample population. These correspondences included guidelines for participating in the study and directions for completing the online survey.

The online survey used for this study, the Pastor Leader/Teacher Orientation Questionnaire (PLTOQ), was comprised of three items mentioned above, along with a fourth instrument, the Pastor Autocratic/Democratic Leadership Scale (PADLS), a scale constructed by this researcher for the purpose of assessing the pastor's self-perceptions of his leadership style. Prior to conducting the study, these four items were submitted to a four-step process of revision and validation to assure validity and reliability of the instrumentation used in this research.

The PLTOQ was administered to both pastors and congregational members of SBC solo-pastor churches. Part 1 of the PLTOQ was used to collect general demographic data on all survey participants, including, but not limited to, information necessary to confirm that the pastors surveyed were currently serving as pastors of SBC solo-pastor churches at the time of the study. Any pastor who was not serving as a pastor of an SBC solo-pastor church at the time of his response to the survey was rejected from the study. Parts 2 and 3 of the PLTOQ were used to assess perceptions of leadership style and teaching orientation, respectively.

All the data collected on the PLTOQ was analyzed to assess: (1) the demographical descriptors of pastors and congregational members related to pastoral leadership style and teaching orientation; (2) the self-reported leadership style and teaching orientation of the solo-pastors in the study; (3) the congregational members' perceptions of the leadership style and teaching orientation of pastors; and (4) the degree of congruency between pastors' and congregational members' perceptions of pastoral leadership style and teaching orientation. The responses to the PLTOQ were collected using an internet-based data collection service. The data collected was analyzed using a statistical analysis computer software program, Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS 19.0). Content analysis was performed on the data gathered. The respondents were categorized according to the various leadership styles and teaching orientations described in this study. Specific statistical measures were used to determine the significance of the relationship between each category associated with leadership style and teaching orientation.

### **Summary of Findings**

The majority of pastors who participated in this study had obtained a high level of formal education, had served in very many leadership and teaching capacities in the ministry, other than as a pastor, and had served as a solo-pastor for the majority of their time in their current pastorate. Additionally, the data collected for this study seemed to suggest that most of the solo-pastors had a desire to share decision-making power to a greater degree with other pastors and lay-elders, and to a lesser degree with the deacons and church members of their respective churches.

The majority of church members who participated in this study had not obtained as high a level of formal education as their pastors, had known the pastor for 5 years or less, but were very active in their worship and Bible study attendance. Also, most church members in this study served on a regular basis in their church as recognized leaders or teachers.

One interesting finding that emerged from the demographic data collected for this study was related to the perceptions of the pastors and church members regarding whom they believed held decision-making power and whom they believed should have held decision-making power. Like the pastors, the church members in this study indicated a desire to have more pastors other than the senior pastor hold primary decision-making power. Additionally, like the pastors, the church members reportedly would have liked to see more lay-elders hold decision-making power in their churches. Furthermore, like the pastors, the church members

apparently would like to have seen fewer deacons hold decision-making power. Unlike the pastors, however, the church members apparently did not believe they should have had any less—or any more—decision-making power.

The vast majority of pastors and church members—as individual members, and as a group of raters—viewed the pastors’ leadership style as being democratic, and most viewed his teaching orientation as being pedagogical. Church members, however, were much more likely to view the pastor as being andragogical in teaching orientation. A preliminary examination of the data collected for this study revealed the following when leadership style and teaching orientation were weighted into dichotomous categories: (1) the self-identified leadership styles and teaching orientations of the solo-pastors surveyed for this study were not significantly related; (2) the individual church members’ perceptions of the pastors’ leadership styles and teaching orientations, however, were related in a statistically very significant way; yet (3) in regard to the practical significance of this association, however, the strength of this relationship was weak, as measured through dichotomous variables; further still, (4) when the individual church members’ ratings of the pastors’ leadership style and teaching orientation were aggregated into church groups, the statistical relationship that emerged based on the individual members’ ratings was diffused.

An examination of the data related Research Question 1 looked at pastors’ perceptions of leadership style and teaching orientation as compared to the demographic characteristics of the pastors in this sample. Through this inquiry, several relationships with varying degrees of statistical significance and strength of association were revealed:

1. The data revealed the presence of a statistically extremely significant and moderately associated relationship between a pastor’s perceptions of teaching orientation as compared to the total number of years the pastor had served as a solo-pastor at his current church at the time of this study. The data seemed to suggest that pastors who perceived themselves as being andragogical served in a chronologically more stable fashion.
2. The data revealed a statistically very significant and moderately associated relationship between a pastor’s perceptions of his own teaching orientation as compared to the formal leadership structure present in the church; specifically, related to the pastor’s identification of church members who actively served in the church as being a part of the formal leadership structure. In this study, pastors who were self-perceived as andragogical were more likely than pedagogical solo-pastors to classify regularly serving church members as a part of the formal leadership structure of their church.
3. The data revealed a statistically significant but weakly associated relationship between a pastor’s perceptions of leadership style as compared to his understanding of who held the primary decision-making power in the church in which he served. In this study, self-identified democratic solo-pastors were more likely to not identify themselves as someone who held primary decision-making power in the church.
4. The data revealed three statistically significant but weakly associated relationships between the pastor’s perceptions of leadership style and teaching orientation, combined, as compared to his understanding of who *should have* held the primary decision-making power in the church: (1) Self-identified democratic solo-pastors were more likely to *not* identify themselves as someone who should have held primary decision-making power in

the church; (2) No autocratic solo-pastors believed deacons should have held primary decision-making power in the church, while self-identified democratic solo-pastors were more likely to identify deacons as someone who should have held primary decision-making power in the church; (3) Self-identified andragogical solo-pastors were proportionally more likely to identify lay-elders as someone who should have held primary decision-making power in the church.

An additional examination of the data related to Research Question 1 looked at church members' perceptions of leadership style and teaching orientation as compared to the demographic characteristics of the church members in this sample. Through this inquiry, several relationships to varying degrees of statistical and practical significance were revealed:

1. The data revealed the presence of a statistically significant but weakly associated relationship between church members' perceptions of pastors' leadership style as compared to the frequency with which they, the church members, served as a part of the church; specifically, church members who identified their solo-pastor with autocratic leadership style were more likely to serve in the church to some degree, than to not serve at all, while church members who identified their solo-pastor with a democratic leadership style, however, were proportionally more likely to serve as a recognized leader or teacher in their church.
2. The data revealed one statistically very significant but weakly associated relationship and one statistically extremely significant but weakly associated relationship between the church member's perceptions of the pastor's leadership style and the church member's understanding of who held the primary decision-making power in the church he or she attended at the time of this study: (1) Church members who identified pastors as autocratic were more likely to also indicate the pastor had primary decision-making power (statistically very significant); (2) Church members who identified the pastor as autocratic were more likely to believe they, the church member, did not have primary decision-making power in the church; whereas, church members who identified the pastor with a democratic leadership style were nearly as like to believe both they and the pastor had primary decision-making power (statistically extremely significant).
3. The data revealed one statistically very significant but negligible relationship and one statistically extremely significant but weakly associated relationship between the church member's perceptions of the pastor's teaching orientation and the church member's understanding of who *should have* held the primary decision-making power in the church he or she attended at the time of this study: (1) Church members who identified their pastor as andragogical were more likely to *not* identify the pastor as one who should have had primary decision-making power (statistically very significant); (2) Church members who identified their pastor as andragogical were more likely to identify themselves as individuals who should have had primary decision-making power (statistically extremely significant).

An examination of the data related to Research Question 2 looked at the extent to which pastors who were identified as being congruent in their leadership style were also identified as being congruent in their teaching orientation. In response to the second research question 163 pastors were identified as congruent leaders, 101 pastors were identified as

congruent teachers, and 93 pastors were identified as congruent leaders-teachers. When pastors were categorized using the dichotomous variable assigned to congruency in this study, however, no statistically significant relationship was found between any of the following: (1) congruent leaders and congruent teachers; (2) a pastor's self-perceived leadership style as compared to his church members' perceptions of his leadership style; (3) a pastor's self-perceived teaching orientation as compared to his church members' perceptions of his teaching orientation.

An examination of the data related to Research Question 3 and 4 looked at the extent to which pastors who were identified being congruent in one dimension were associated with a particular orientation in the other dimension. In other words, congruent leadership was examined related to teaching orientation (Research Question 3), and congruent teachers were examined related to leadership style (Research Question 4). This examination revealed four important findings:

1. In regard to Research Question 3, pastors who were identified as congruent leaders and congruent leaders/teachers primarily perceived themselves as being pedagogical in teaching orientation. Church members, too, primarily perceived pastors who were identified as congruent leaders and congruent leaders/teachers as being pedagogical; but, they were much more likely than the pastors, themselves, to identify the pastor with andragogical teaching orientation.
2. In regard to Research Question 4, both pastors and church members perceived pastors, as congruent teachers and congruent leaders-teachers, as primarily being democratic in leadership style.
3. The data related to Research Question 3 revealed one statistically extremely significant and relatively strong relationship associated with leader/teacher congruency and church members' perceptions of their pastor's teaching orientation. Apparently, if the pastor and church members viewed the pastor as the same kind of leader and teacher (i.e., he was a congruent leader/teacher), there was a relationship between him being a congruent leader/teacher and the church members' perceptions of the pastor's teaching orientation.
4. In somewhat of a cross-corollary fashion, the data related to Research Question 4 revealed one statistically extremely significant and moderately associated relationship between leader/teacher congruency and pastors' self-perceptions of their own leadership style. Apparently, if the pastor and church members viewed the pastor as the same kind of leader and teacher (i.e., he was a congruent leader/teacher), there was a relationship between him being a congruent leader/teacher and his self-perceived leadership style.

Nevertheless, despite the various findings articulated above, by the end of the examination of the original research questions developed for this study, this researcher was somewhat dissatisfied with the results revealed by these questions. In short, while classifying the pastors in a dichotomous way for both leadership and teaching did reveal statistically significant findings associated with the relationship between leadership style and teaching orientation, by making the orientations binary and then largely centering the research questions completely around these binary orientations, much of the practical significance of the data collected for this research study was obscured.

This reality led the researcher to look at the data collected for this study through an additional line of inquiry. In essence, the findings in this study suggest that when leadership style

and teaching orientation were weighted as dichotomous variables, the relationship between leadership and teaching was complementary, rather than corollary (see Figure 1).

← Pedagogical to Andragogical →	Autocratic/Andragogical (A/A)	Democratic/Andragogical (D/A)
	Pastors: 1 Members (individual): 12 Members (as groups): 0 Cong. Leaders (pastors): 0 Cong. Leaders (member): 0 Cong. Teachers (pastors): 0 Cong. Teachers (members): 0 Congruent Leaders/Teachers: 0	Pastors: 29 Members (individual): 279 Members (as groups): 73 Cong. Leaders (pastors): 29 Cong. Leaders (member): 69 Cong. Teachers (pastors): 14 Cong. Teachers (members): 14 Congruent Leaders/Teachers: 14
	Autocratic/Pedagogical (A/P)	Democratic/Pedagogical (D/P)
	Pastors: 11 Members (individual): 36 Members (as groups): 3 Cong. Leaders (pastors): 1 Cong. Leaders (member): 1 Cong. Teachers (pastors): 7 Cong. Teachers (members): 3 Congruent Leaders/Teachers: 1	Pastors: 135 Members (individual): 281 Members (as groups): 100 Cong. Leaders (pastors): 133 Cong. Leaders (member): 93 Cong. Teachers (pastors): 80 Cong. Teachers (members): 84 Congruent Leaders/Teachers: 78
	← Autocratic to Democratic →	

Figure 1. Summary of all orientation mixes by quadrant

Figure 1 presents a summary of the orientation mixes of pastoral leadership style and teaching orientation, as perceived by: (1) pastors, (2) church members as individual raters, (3) church members as aggregate groups of raters, (4) congruent leaders as perceived by pastors, (5) congruent leaders as perceived by church member groups, (6) congruent teachers as perceived by pastors, (7) congruent teachers as perceived by church member groups, and (8) congruent leaders/teachers.

In his study, Mattia suggested that SBC pastors were primarily either autocratic/pedagogical (A/P) or democratic/andragogical (D/A), with D/A comprising the predominant orientation mix (Mattia 1991, 101-02). While the findings in this study supported the notion that SBC pastors who perceive themselves as being autocratic tend to perceive themselves as being pedagogical, it differed significantly from Mattia's findings that SBC pastors who perceive themselves as being democratic tend to perceive themselves as being andragogical.

It is clear from looking at Figure 1 that certain trends of orientation mix are more prevalent; however, the cumulative weight of the findings of this study suggests that a given orientation on one dimension does not necessitate a given orientation on the other dimension. In other words, in a practical sense, this study suggests that a pastor who is an autocratic (or leader-centered) leader will tend to be more pedagogical (or teacher-centered); but, so too, will a democratic (or follower-centered) leader also tend to be more pedagogical (or teacher-centered).

Thus, this study suggests that a pastor who is follower-centered is not, in a corollary fashion, automatically andragogical (or learner-centered). Knowles suggests that, for learners, a “universal characteristic of the maturation process is movement from a state of dependency toward states of increasing self-directedness” (Knowles et al. 2005, 262-63). This study suggests that a pastor who leads in a follower-centered way cannot assume he is, by extension, teaching in a way that encourages his church members to become more self-directed in their learning.

Additionally, it is significant to note that church members who perceived their pastor as being an autocratic (or leader-centered) leader tended to be perceive him as a more pedagogical (or teacher-centered) teacher. However, church members who perceived their pastor as a democratic (or follower-centered) leader were almost just as likely to see him as an andragogical (or learner-centered) teacher, as they were to see him as a pedagogical (or teacher-centered) teacher. Thus, from the perspectives of the church members, too, the pastor’s leadership style and teaching orientation should be seen as being complementary, and not corollary. This study suggests that a pastor who is perceived as being follower-centered, is not, in a corollary fashion, automatically perceived as being andragogical, regardless of how likely that might be.

Thus, the original findings if this study still presented a nagging question: If pastors can be positioned in any of the four quadrants of Figure 1, and they can—as the literature suggests—change either their leadership style or teaching orientation, but that a categorical change in one dimension does not necessitate a categorical change in the other dimension—as this study suggests—what does the movement from one quadrant to another tend to look like?

To answer this question, the researcher determined the simple linear regressions for each of the key statistical relationships presented by the data collected for this study. The findings of this procedure allowed the researcher to propose a theory of cross-perceptual teaching. The theory presented in this study was conceptualized as follows:

$$\Delta P\text{Lead} \approx \Delta C\text{MLead} \approx \Delta C\text{MTeach}, \not\approx \Delta P\text{Teach}$$

The theory proposed above suggests that training pastors to practice more participatory leadership is the key to equipping pastors to effectively change their church members’ perceptions of their leadership and teaching, to such a degree that pastors can teach and say hard things (teacher-centered things), while still being perceived as follower and learner-centered. This researcher believes this theory demands to be tested through further research.