

Bases of social power, leadership styles, and organizational commitment

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Affective organizational commitment reflects the extent to which organizational members are loyal and willing to work toward organizational objectives (Meyer & Allen, 1997). In particular, affective organizational commitment holds very important implications at all organizational levels (e.g., turnover rates, performance, and citizenship behavior). Whereas previous research has evinced the positive influence of transformational and charismatic leadership styles on affective commitment toward the organization (Bass & Avolio, 1994), little is known with regard to the nature of this relationship. In line with the interpersonal power/interaction model, the present investigation aimed to investigate the mechanism at play between transformational leadership style and affective organizational commitment. Specifically, we hypothesized that transformational leadership style would increase affective organizational commitment through its effect on willingness to comply with soft bases of power. In two studies, we subjected the foregoing hypotheses to empirical scrutiny. In Study 1, the proposed mediation model was empirically supported with Italian employees in the public sector. Attesting to the robustness of our findings, Study 2 replicated the findings of Study 1 with Italian employees from the public and private sectors. In addition, Study 2 replicated Study 1 using a different measure of transformational leadership. Both Study 1 and Study 2 provided results consistent with our hypotheses. Specifically, the present paper reports empirical evidence that (1) the more participants report having a transformational leader, the more willing they become to comply with soft (but not harsh) power bases, (2) in turn, greater willingness to comply with soft (but not harsh) power bases increases one's affective organizational commitment. These findings provide additional support for the interpersonal power/interaction model and pave the way for new research directions.

Keywords: Interpersonal power interaction model; Leadership styles; Compliance; Affective organizational commitment; Power bases.

L'attachement affectif organisationnel reflète à quel point les membres de l'organisation sont loyaux et prêts à travailler pour les objectifs organisationnels (Meyer & Allen, 1997). En particulier, l'attachement affectif organisationnel comporte des implications très importantes à plusieurs niveaux organisationnels (rotation d'employés, performance et comportements citoyens). Malgré la recherche antérieure démontrant une influence positive du leadership transformationnel et charismatique sur l'attachement affectif organisationnel (Bass & Avolio, 1994), peu de chose est connu sur la nature de cette relation. En lien avec l'*Interpersonal Power/Interaction Model*, le but du présent manuscrit était d'examiner le mécanisme en jeu dans le lien entre le style de leadership transformationnel et l'attachement affectif organisationnel. Spécifiquement, nous avons émis l'hypothèse que le leadership transformationnel augmenterait indirectement l'attachement affectif organisationnel à travers son effet sur le désir de se soumettre à des sources de pouvoir *soft* (mais pas *harsh*). Deux études ont permis de tester cette hypothèse de façon empirique. Dans l'Étude 1, le modèle de médiation fut soutenu avec des employés italiens du secteur public. Démontrant le caractère robuste de nos résultats, l'Étude 2 reproduisit les résultats de l'Étude 1 avec des employés du secteur public et du secteur privé. De plus, l'Étude 2 reproduisit l'Étude 1 avec une mesure différente de leadership transformationnel. L'Étude 1 et l'Étude 2 ont démontré des résultats en accord avec nos hypothèses. Spécifiquement, ces études montrent (1) que plus les

participants rapportent avoir un leader transformationnel, plus ils deviennent enclin à se soumettre à des sources de pouvoir *soft* (mais pas *harsh*) et (2) qu'en retour, le désir accru de se soumettre à des sources *soft* de pouvoir (mais pas *harsh*) augmente l'attachement affectif organisationnel. Ces résultats soutiennent l'*Interpersonal Power/Interaction Model* et ouvrent vers de nouvelles pistes de recherche.

El compromiso afectivo con la organización refleja la medida en que los miembros de la organización son leales y están dispuestos a trabajar por los objetivos organizacionales (Meyer & Allen, 1997). En particular, el compromiso afectivo con la organización tiene implicaciones muy importantes en todos los niveles organizacionales (p.ej., índices de rotación, desempeño, conducta cívica). Mientras que la investigación previa ha mostrado la influencia positiva de los estilos de liderazgo transformacional y carismático sobre el compromiso afectivo hacia la organización (Bass & Avolio, 1994), se sabe poco con respecto a la naturaleza de esta relación. Congruente con el Modelo de poder/interacción interpersonal, el presente manuscrito se propuso investigar el mecanismo en función entre el estilo de liderazgo transformacional y el compromiso afectivo con la organización. Específicamente, planteamos de manera hipotética que el estilo de liderazgo transformacional aumentaría el compromiso afectivo con la organización mediante su efecto sobre la voluntad de obedecer con bases de poder ligeras. En dos estudios, sometimos las hipótesis precedentes a escrutinio empírico. En el Estudio 1, se apoyó empíricamente el modelo de mediación propuesto, con empleados italianos del sector público. Se acreditó la robustez de nuestros hallazgos puesto que el Estudio 2 replicó los hallazgos del Estudio 1 con empleados italianos de los sectores público y privado. Además, el Estudio 2 replicó el Estudio 1 usando una medida diferente de liderazgo transformacional. Tanto el Estudio 1 como el Estudio 2 proveyeron resultados consistentes con nuestras hipótesis. Específicamente, el presente manuscrito expone evidencia empírica de que (1) cuanto más informan los participantes tener un líder transformacional, más dispuestos se vuelven a obedecer con bases de poder ligeras (pero no severas), (2) en cambio, una mayor disposición a obedecer con bases de poder ligeras (pero no severas) aumenta el compromiso afectivo de uno con la organización. Estos hallazgos proveen apoyo adicional para el Modelo de poder/interacción interpersonal y preparan el camino para nuevas direcciones de la investigación.

Social power is at the heart of group dynamics. In the workplace, social power is particularly tied to supervisors' strategies directed at their subordinates to gain compliance from them. Of interest are the organizational outcomes associated with different uses of social power in the work force. In that vein, one of the primary functions of leaders is to enhance affective organizational commitment of the members of the organization in order to achieve the goals the organization has fixed for itself. However, increasing organizational commitment is easier said than done, and presumably requires the right approach to succeed. Specifically, increasing affective organizational commitment may depend on the leader's leadership style and the bases of social power he or she uses to achieve this goal. According to social power theory (French & Raven, 1959), leaders can use a wide range of *bases* of power (or sources of power) to influence their subordinates. These bases of power—categorized into *harsh* and *soft* bases of power, depending on how they restrict one's autonomy to comply (Raven, Schwarzwald, & Koslowsky, 1998)—may not all be effective in augmenting organizational commitment. While there is an extensive literature regarding effects of leadership style on positive organizational outcomes (for a review, see Hiller, DeChurch, Murase, & Doty, 2011), the relationship between

leadership style and compliance with social power has not received much attention (Koslowsky, Schwarzwald, & Ashuri, 2001; Schwarzwald, Koslowsky, & Agassi, 2001), especially with regard to organizational commitment. The present work tries to fill this gap in knowledge by examining the role of leadership styles in organizational commitment through its influence on compliance with various power bases (soft vs. harsh).

LEADERSHIP STYLES, AFFECTIVE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITMENT, AND POWER BASES

Organizational commitment—the attachment of an individual to his or her organization—is a fundamental dimension of organizational life. Organizational commitment plays a role in organizational effectiveness (Steers, 1975), wellbeing (Begley & Czajka, 1993), citizenship behavior (Organ & Ryan, 1995), and lower turnover rates (Hom, Katerberg, & Hulin, 1979; Somers, 1995). Meyer and Allen (1991) pointed out that there may be three reasons why a person wants to remain with an organization: He or she (a) needs the salary or benefits; (b) feels some obligation to stay with the organization, because it is the right thing to do; (c) feels happy with the organization and

feels emotionally attached to it. It is the last component that they refer to as the *affective component*, which we believe would be especially related to power.

BASES OF POWER AND THE INTERPERSONAL POWER INTERACTION MODEL

Research on the bases of social power has become a central concept in social and organizational psychology. Social power is defined as the potential or ability of an agent to bring change in attitudes, behavior, or belief by using resources available to him or her (Raven, 2008). *Leadership*, on the other hand, refers to *actual use* of power in effecting attitude or behavioral change (Raven, 1993). Power has different origins. (French and Raven, 1959; Raven, 1965) distinguished six bases or sources of power with which the target might accept or resist complying. These are *coercive power*, *reward power*, *legitimate power*, *expert power*, *referent power*, and *informational power*. We describe them in turn.

With informational power, the target accepts, understands, and internalizes the change independently, without further reference to the influencing agent. With coercive power and reward power, the change is socially dependent in that the target continues to relate the changes to the influencing agent and thus requires continued surveillance by the influencing agent to maintain the change. In contrast, change occurring through legitimate, expert, and referent power is also socially dependent, but continued surveillance is not necessary.

Raven's (2008) interpersonal power interaction model (IPIM) distinguished the previously described six bases of power into 11 different bases of power. Specifically, coercive and reward power were further differentiated into "impersonal" threats of punishment or promises of reward (such as threats of demotion or promises of increased pay) and "personal" coercion and reward which stem from the agent liking vs. disliking the target of influence. IPIM further differentiated legitimate power into four categories: (1) *legitimate position power*, based on a social norm requiring obedience from people who are in a superior position in a formal or informal social structure; (2) *legitimate power of reciprocity*, based on a social norm that requires someone to feel the obligation to reciprocate; (3) *legitimate power of equity*, based on an equity (or compensatory) norm requiring obedience to someone who has suffered or worked hard, or someone whom we

have harmed in some way; (4) *legitimate power of dependence*, based on a social responsibility norm that obliges compliance with the requests of someone who is in need of assistance.

While the finer differentiation of power bases has proved useful in exploring the subtleties of power, subsequent research has demonstrated that in most settings, the 11 power bases detailed by the IPIM can be characterized as *harsh* and *soft* categories (Pierro, Cicero, & Raven, 2008; Pierro, Kruglanski, & Raven, 2012). We describe them both in the following section.

Harsh vs. soft bases of power

The harsh-soft bases of power are differentiated by the amount of freedom that the target feels in choosing whether or not to comply. Harsh power bases, as the name suggests, constrain individuals' freedom to comply with the leaders' demands. Harsh power bases include coercion, reward, legitimacy of position, equity, and reciprocity. Soft power bases, on the other hand, endow organizational members with more freedom and autonomy in accepting the demands from the influencing agent. Soft power bases include expert, referent, informational power, and legitimacy of dependence. Compared to harsh power bases, soft power bases are typically received more favorably and are associated with more positive individual and organizational outcomes (e.g., Koslowski et al., 2001; Pierro et al., 2012). Despite these differences, not all leaders are inclined to bring soft power bases into play; different leaders have different leadership styles that influence which bases of power they will use. In the present paper we focus on transformational leadership.

Transformational/Charismatic leadership

In recent decades, "transformational" (Bass, 1985) and "charismatic" (Conger & Kanungo, 1998) leadership theories have emerged in the field of industrial and organizational psychology. Both transformational and charismatic leadership have been shown to influence organizational members by transforming their values and priorities, while motivating them to perform beyond their expectations (Rowold & Heinitz, 2007). Because of their conceptual and empirical similarity, Hunt and Conger (1999) have proposed the use of transformational and charismatic leadership as synonymous terms. Supporting this proposition, several studies have underlined similar positive effects of

charismatic and transformational leadership on several organizational outcomes (Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996). For example, Lowe, Kroeck and Sivasubramaniam (1996) found that transformational leadership enhanced follower satisfaction and performance; at the same time Bass and his colleagues have shown a positive correlations between this leadership style and the group cohesiveness and group potency (Bass, Avolio, Jung, & Berson, 2003).

To explain the psychological dynamics underlying transformational leadership influence, Conger and Kanungo (1998) referred to social psychology theories of persuasion. Attesting that transformational leaders are more likely to utilize soft power bases, these authors posited that charismatic influence stems from the leader's personal idiosyncratic power (referent and expert powers) rather than from position power (legal, coercive, and reward powers) determined by organizational rules and regulations. Thus, with transformational leadership, the followers' compliance is the result of internalization of the leader's vision and of self-efficacy beliefs, rather than a consequence of a position power base (e.g., public acceptance; Bass, 1985). These processes appear to be quite effective and relevant for organizations. Indeed, research by Bass and Avolio (1994) suggests that transformational leadership is particularly effective in increasing organizational commitment.

Leadership style as a determinant of the effectiveness of power bases

IPIM suggests that the propensity of a target of influence to comply is intimately related to the influencing agent's characteristics. If transformational leaders tend to rely on soft power bases, this raises the question of whether their subordinates are more likely to comply with these types of power bases. Research by Deluga (1990) shows support for that proposition. In his research, subordinates with a transformational leader were more likely to respond to soft power bases. Similarly, research conducted by Schwarzwald et al. (2001) with the Israeli police force found that while there was a greater tendency for police officers to comply with softer rather than harsher power bases (from their captains), those who worked with high transformational police captains, as compared to low transformational captains, reported a significantly greater likelihood of compliance with both harsh and soft power bases. Thus Schwarzwald

et al. concluded that leadership style is a major factor in determining compliance.

With respect to social power, Koslowsky et al. (2001) found that organizational commitment is positively related to compliance with both power bases (harsh and soft), whereas Pierro, De Grada, Kruglanski, and Raven (2007) found that affective organizational commitment is positively related only to compliance with soft power bases. In line with these conceptual and empirical considerations, we examine organizational commitment as an outcome related to the influence of power bases.

OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENT RESEARCH

The aim of the present research was to "connect the dots" by integrating previous findings on leadership style, compliance with different bases of power, and organizational commitment. Specifically, we aimed to investigate the mechanism through which transformational leaders are able to increase affective organizational commitment of the members of the organization. Based on previous findings, we predicted that transformational leadership would be positively associated with affective organizational commitment (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Additionally, we predicted that transformational leadership would be associated with subordinates' willingness to comply with soft bases of power (Schwarzwald et al., 2001), which in turn would be positively associated with affective organizational commitment (Pierro et al., 2007). Thus, we predicted a mediation model where transformation leadership increases affective organizational commitment through its effect on willingness to comply with soft bases of power. Two field studies were conducted within different work organizations and with different measures in order to replicate and find converging evidence for the dynamic process described in Figure 1.

STUDY 1

The objective of Study 1 was to provide evidence that transformational leadership style would have an effect on affective organizational commitment through its effect on followers' willingness to comply with soft power bases. In order to achieve that goal, Study 1 took place in a field setting and assessed governmental employees.

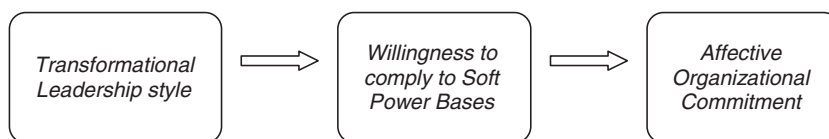


Figure 1. Expected relationship between transformational leadership style, soft power bases, and affective organizational commitment.

Method

Participants

One hundred and forty-seven Italian state employees (57 men and 90 women, $M_{\text{age}} = 44.14$ years; $SD_{\text{age}} = 9.78$) participated in the study on a voluntary basis. Participants were approached by a senior member of the organization and were told that this was a study on organizational behavior. All responses were kept anonymous. Participants had an average service of about 17 years and six months. Thirty-four percent of participants had a university degree and 66% had graduated from high school.

Measures

Transformational leadership. The Italian version (back-translated) of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-1) was used to measure transformational leadership. Following recommendation from Bass (1985), only a subset of the scale items was used in this study. Thus, there were 28 transformational items, including 18 for charisma (e.g., “Inspires loyalty to him/her”, $\alpha = .96$), seven for individualized consideration (e.g., “Treats each subordinate individually”, $\alpha = .85$), and three for intellectual stimulation (e.g., “Enables me to think about old problems in new ways”, $\alpha = .85$). Participants were asked to judge how frequently each statement fit their supervisors’ behaviors on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*frequently*). A score was computed for each dimension as well as a single score of transformational leadership ($\alpha = .96$).

The Interpersonal Power Inventory (IPI, worker’s format). To examine subordinates’ willingness to comply with harsh or soft bases of power used by their supervisor, the Italian version (Pierro, De Grada, Raven, & Kruglanski, 2004) of the Worker’s Format of the IPI (Raven et al., 1998) was administered to the participants. The IPI format reads as follows.

Often supervisors ask subordinates to do their job somewhat differently. Sometimes subordinates

resist doing so or do not follow the supervisor’s directions exactly. Other times, they will do exactly as their supervisor requests. We are interested in those situations which lead subordinates to follow the requests of their supervisor.

Participants were then presented with 33 statements (e.g., “My supervisor could help me receive special benefits”) representing the 11 power bases delineated by the IPIM (three items for each tactic). Respondents were then asked to indicate how likely each descriptive statement represents a reason for complying with their supervisor. Participants gave their ratings on a scale ranging from 1 (*definitely not a reason*) to 7 (*definitely a reason*).

As mentioned above, the literature indicates that the 11 power bases can be reduced to two dimensions (harsh vs. soft; Raven et al., 1998). Consequently, we computed a harsh (impersonal and personal reward and coercion, legitimacy of position, equity, and reciprocity) and a soft (information, expertise, reference, and legitimacy of dependence) power bases category. Both harsh ($\alpha = .91$) and soft ($\alpha = .91$) categories of power bases were found to be reliable.

Affective organizational commitment (OC). Organizational commitment was measured with the Italian version (Pierro et al., 2004) of the six-item Affective OC subscale (e.g., “This organization has a great deal of personal meaning for me” and “I would be happy to spend the rest of my career with this organization”), developed by Meyer, Allen, and Smith (1993). Each item was rated on a six-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 6 (*strongly agree*). The scale was found to be reliable ($\alpha = .70$).

Results

Validity of IPI and transformational leadership measures

To assess the convergent and discriminant validity of IPI and the transformational leadership measure we performed a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with three (correlated) latent

TABLE 1
Parameter estimates for CFA: Completely standardized solution (Study 1; $N = 147$)

	<i>Harsh power</i>	<i>Soft power</i>	<i>Transformational leadership</i>
<i>Matrix of factor loadings</i>			
Impersonal reward	.65*	—	—
Impersonal coercion	.46*	—	—
Personal reward	.85*	—	—
Personal coercion	.78*	—	—
Legitimacy of reciprocity	.81*	—	—
Legitimacy of equity	.66*	—	—
Legitimacy of position	.47*	—	—
Reference	—	.63*	—
Information	—	.82*	—
Expertise	—	.80*	—
Legitimacy of dependence	—	.82*	—
Charisma	—	—	.97*
Individualized consideration	—	—	.76*
Intellectual stimulation	—	—	.74*
<i>Matrix of factor correlations</i>			
Harsh power	1.00		
Soft power	.68*	1.00	
Transformational leadership	.42*	.57*	1.00

* $p < .05$.

factors (harsh and soft power bases, and transformational leadership). The observed variables contained in the CFA model were represented by the 11 power bases (seven harsh and four soft power bases) and by the three subdimensions (charisma, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation) of transformational leadership. The covariance matrix was used as input. CFA results show that the model fit was satisfactory, $\chi^2(74, N = 147) = 242.60$, $p = .00$; CFI = .92. The factor loading values were all significant and above .47 (see Table 1), thus demonstrating convergent validity for the constructs with multiple indicators (Bagozzi, 1994). There is a relatively high correlation between harsh and soft power bases (.68, see Table 1). However, the correlations between latent factors were moderate to high (ranging between .42 and .68), but statistically less than 1.00, and therefore achieved statistical discriminant validity (Bagozzi, 1994).

However, (a) the correlations between latent factors are correlations corrected for attenuation and are expected to be higher than raw coefficients (see Table 2), and (b) the test of discriminant validity via the CFA approach using variables that share one common method factor is a relatively stringent one, because any common method variance will tend to inflate all the correlations (Bagozzi, 1994). In any case, to further prove discriminant validity of the constructs we compared the estimated three-factor model with two alternative models: one with two latent factors

(power and transformational leadership) and one with one latent factor. Results show that the three-factor model fits the data better than either the two-factor model, $\chi^2(76, N = 147) = 328.19$, $p = .00$; CFI = .89, or the one-factor model, $\chi^2(77, N = 147) = 481.62$, $p = .00$; CFI = .82, thus supporting the distinction between the three constructs.

Relationship between power bases, transformational leadership and organizational commitment

Descriptive statistics and correlations between variables are presented in Table 2. As can be seen, transformational leadership style was positively and significantly related to both power bases (more strongly with soft than harsh power bases), consistent with results of Schwarzwald et al. (2001). However, partial correlations between these variables demonstrated that, when controlling for harsh power bases, soft power bases were still significantly related to transformational leadership ($pr = .43$, $p < .001$), whereas when controlling for soft power bases, harsh power bases were no longer significantly related to transformational leadership ($pr = .06$; *ns*). Moreover, as can be seen in Table 2, OC was positively and significantly related to soft power bases and to transformational leadership. Harsh power bases were not significantly related with OC. Finally, as can be seen in Table 2,

TABLE 2
Descriptive statistics and correlations between variables (Study 1)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Harsh power	2.98	1.02	(.91)						
2. Soft power	4.06	1.30	.62***	(.91)					
3. Transformational leadership	2.92	.88	.37***	.54***	(.96)				
4. Charisma	2.89	.98	.35***	.54***	.98***	(.96)			
5. Individualized consideration	3.20	.87	.33***	.43***	.83***	.73***	(.85)		
6. Intellectual stimulation	2.49	1.00	.33***	.44***	.77***	.73***	.53***	(.85)	
7. Affective OC	4.22	.98	.15***	.39***	.33***	.34***	.22***	.29***	(.70)

** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Alpha coefficients are shown in parentheses.

TABLE 3

Affective organizational commitment as a function of transformational leadership and soft power bases: Results of hierarchical multiple regression analysis (Study 1)

Predictor variables	<i>B</i>
Transformational leadership (first step)	.34***
Transformational leadership (second step)	.17
Soft power (second step)	.29**

** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. R^2 for the first step was .112; for total model it was .168.

participants were significantly more sensitive to soft power bases than to harsh power bases, $F(1, 145) = 157.76$; $p < .001$, thus confirming the results of previous studies (Pierro et al., 2004, 2012; Raven et al., 1998).

To further examine the relationship between these variables, several multiple regression analyses were performed. The first multiple regression analysis examined the level of OC as a function of harsh and soft power bases simultaneously. Results indicated that OC was positively and significantly related to soft power bases ($\beta = .49$; $p < .001$), but not harsh power bases ($\beta = -.16$, ns). On the basis of these results the mediating role of soft power bases in the relationship between transformational leadership (using the composite score encompassing all three facets of the construct) and OC was tested through hierarchical multiple regression analyses. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), for mediation to occur, four conditions need to be met: (1) variation in the independent variable (transformational leadership styles in this case) should significantly account for variation in the mediator (i.e., soft power bases in this case), (2) variation in the mediator should significantly account for variation in the dependent variable (i.e. OC), (3) variation in the independent variable should significantly account for variation in the dependent variable. These first

three steps were conducted. Results provided support for each of these conditions (see Table 3). The fourth condition stipulates that the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable should be substantially reduced once the mediator effect on the dependent variable is controlled for. Accordingly, results indicated that the relationship between transformational leadership and OC was no longer significant ($\beta = .17$, ns), when controlling for soft power bases. Notably, this pattern of results remained the same when controlling for harsh power bases. Using Baron and Kenny's (1986) modification of the Sobel test (see Kenny, Kashy, & Bolger, 1998) the reduction in effect size attributable to soft power bases was significant ($Z = 2.87$, $p < .01$). These results indicate that the relationship between transformational leadership and OC was *fully* mediated by compliance with soft power.

Analyzing the effects of dimensions of transformational leadership on soft power bases and affective organizational commitment

To further analyze which components of transformational leadership (i.e., charisma, individualized consideration, and intellectual stimulation) promote individuals' willingness to comply with soft power bases, separate multiple regression analyses were conducted. In this analysis, we regressed soft power bases on all the transformational leadership facets. Results demonstrated that only the charisma component was significantly and positively related to soft power bases ($\beta = .41$, $p < .001$). The relationships between soft power bases and individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation were $\beta = .07$, ns , and $\beta = .10$, ns , respectively. In addition, further regression analyses with all the transformational leadership facets demonstrated that only the charisma dimension was significantly and positively related to OC ($\beta = .30$, $p < .05$), whereas individualized

TABLE 4

Affective organizational commitment as a function of charismatic leadership and soft power bases: Results of hierarchical multiple regression analysis (Study 1)

Predictor variables	B
Charismatic leadership (first step)	.34***
Charismatic leadership (second step)	.18
Willingness to comply to soft power (second step)	.29**

** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. R^2 for the first step was .116; for total model it was .171.

consideration ($\beta = -.05$, ns), and intellectual stimulation ($\beta = .09$, ns) were not significantly related to OC.

Based on these results, the mediating role of soft power bases in the relationship between charisma and OC was tested using multiple regression analyses. In this analysis, the OC scores in the first step were regressed only on charisma, and in the second step on both charisma and soft power bases. The results of the last multiple regression analysis (see Table 4) evinced that the relationship between charisma and OC was no longer significant ($\beta = .18$, ns), when controlling for soft power bases. Notably, this pattern of results remained the same when controlling for harsh power bases. Results of the Sobel test show that the reduction in effect size attributable to soft power bases was significant ($Z = 2.83$, $p < .01$), confirming the mediating role of such power bases.

Results clearly indicated that transformational leadership style (particularly its charisma dimension) was positively related to soft power bases (controlling for harsh bases). Also, the results demonstrated that transformational leadership (again, particularly its charisma dimension) and soft power were both positively related to affective OC. More importantly, these analyses highlighted the mediating role of soft power bases in the relationship between transformational leadership (charisma) and organizational commitment, thus confirming our hypotheses.

STUDY 2

Study 2 was conducted to replicate Study 1 in different working settings. Study 2 also used a different measure of transformational leadership in order to provide converging evidence for the role of willingness to comply with soft bases of power in the relationship between transformational leadership and affective organizational commitment.

Method

Participants

One hundred and fifty-nine employees (57 men and 102 women, $M_{\text{age}} = 43.5$ years, $SD_{\text{age}} = 9.78$) drawn from three Italian different organizations—a large energy research department ($N = 52$), an aerospace research and project company ($N = 52$), and a national research institution ($N = 55$)—participated in this study on a voluntary basis. Akin to Study 1, participants were approached by a senior member of the organization and were told that this was a study on organizational behavior. All responses were kept anonymous. Participants had an average service of about 16 years and 7 months. Sixty-two percent of the participants had a university degree and 37.7% had graduated from high school.

Measures

Charismatic Leadership Scale. The Italian version (back-translated) of the Conger–Kanungo Charismatic Leadership Questionnaire (Conger & Kanungo, 1998) was used to measure charismatic leadership. The scale is composed of 23 items divided in five subscales: (1) strategic vision and articulation (six items, e.g., “Provides inspiring strategic and organizational goals”), (2) sensitivity to the environment (seven items, e.g., “Readily recognizes new environmental opportunities (favorable physical and social conditions) that may facilitate achievement of organizational objectives”), (3) unconventional behavior (three items, e.g., “Often exhibits very unique behavior that surprise other members of the organization”), (4) personal risk (four items, e.g., “Takes high personal risk for the sake of the organization”), and (5) sensitivity to member needs (three items, e.g., “Shows sensitivity to the needs and feelings of other members in the organization”). Participants were asked to indicate the extent to which each statement was characteristic of their supervisor, on a six-point scale ranging from 1 (very uncharacteristic) to 6 (very characteristic). A single score of charismatic leadership was computed for each participant ($\alpha = .95$).

The Interpersonal Power Inventory (IPI, worker's format). Participants responded to the same 33-item measure of compliance with power bases used in Study 1. As in Study 1, the 11 power bases were divided into harsh and soft power bases categories. Both harsh ($\alpha = .94$) and soft ($\alpha = .91$)

TABLE 5
Parameter estimates for CFA: Completely standardized solution (Study 2; $N = 159$)

	<i>Harsh power bases</i>	<i>Soft power bases</i>	<i>Charismatic leadership</i>
<i>Matrix of factor loadings</i>			
Impersonal reward	.75*	—	—
Impersonal coercion	.62*	—	—
Personal reward	.81*	—	—
Personal coercion	.88*	—	—
Legitimacy of reciprocity	.82*	—	—
Legitimacy of equity	.79*	—	—
Legitimacy of position	.72*	—	—
Reference	—	.82*	—
Information	—	.79*	—
Expertise	—	.76*	—
Legitimacy of dependence	—	.68*	—
Vision and articulation	—	—	.94*
Sensitivity to the environment	—	—	.89*
Unconventional behavior	—	—	.42*
Personal risk	—	—	.76*
Sensitivity to member needs	—	—	.72*
<i>Matrix of factor correlations</i>			
Harsh power bases	1.00		
Soft power bases	.74*	1.00	
Charismatic leadership	.15	.52*	1.00

* $p < .05$.

categories of power bases were found to be reliable.

Affective organizational commitment (OC). Participants responded to the same six-item measure of affective OC used in Study 1. The scale was found to be reliable ($\alpha = .83$).

Results

Validity of IPI and charismatic leadership measures

As in Study 1, we assessed the convergent and discriminant validity of IPI and charismatic leadership measures, performing a CFA with three (correlated) latent factors (harsh and soft power bases and charismatic leadership). The observed variables contained in the CFA model were represented by the 11 power bases (seven harsh and four soft power bases) and by the five subdimensions (strategic vision and articulation, sensitivity to the environment, unconventional behavior, personal risk, and sensitivity to member needs) of charismatic leadership. Again, the covariance matrix was used as input. CFA results show that the model fits quite satisfactorily, $\chi^2(101, N = 159) = 296.17$, $p = .00$; CFI = .94. The factor loading values were all significant and above .42 (see Table 5), thus demonstrating convergent validity. The disattenuated correlations between latent factors were low and nonsignificant (between

charisma and harsh power bases, .15) to moderate (between charisma and soft power bases, .52) to relatively high (between harsh and soft power bases, .74), but all statistically less than 1.00 (see Table 5), therefore discriminant validity of the constructs was achieved. Again, to further prove discriminant validity of the constructs we compare the three-factor model estimated with two alternative models: one with two latent factors (power and charismatic leadership) and one with one latent factor. Results shows that the three-factor model fits the data better than both the two-factor model, $\chi^2(103, N = 159) = 425.52$, $p = .00$; CFI = .90, and the one-factor model, $\chi^2(104, N = 159) = 837.78$, $p = .00$; CFI = .77, thus supporting the distinction between the three constructs.

The relationship between power bases, charismatic leadership and organizational commitment

Four between-subjects ANOVAs showed non-significant effect of the participants' belonging organization on our variables: charismatic leadership, $F(2, 156) = 1.55$, *ns*; soft power, $F(2, 156) = .71$, *ns*; harsh power, $F(2, 156) = .95$, *ns*; OC, $F(2, 156) = .24$, *ns*. Moreover, a within-subjects ANOVA shows that participants from all organizations were significantly, $F(1, 158) = 212.43$, $p < .001$, more sensitive to soft power

TABLE 6
Descriptive statistics and correlations between variables (Study 2)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
1. Harsh power bases	2.97	1.27	(.94)	(.91)	(.95)	(.83)
2. Soft power bases	4.26	1.25	.61***	.45***	.17*	
3. Charismatic leadership	4.03	.94	.11	.25**		
4. Affective organizational commitment	4.32	1.10	.13			

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$. Alpha coefficients are shown in parentheses.

TABLE 7

Affective organizational commitment as a function of power bases and charismatic leadership: Results of hierarchical multiple regression analysis (Study 2)

Predictor variables	<i>B</i>
First step	
Charismatic leadership	.17*
Organization A (A vs. B, C)	.01
Organization B (B vs. A, C)	.04
Second step	
Charismatic leadership	.07
Soft power	.22**
Organization A (A vs. B, C)	-.01
Organization B (B vs. A, C)	.04

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; Organization A (Organization A = 0; Organizations B and C = 1); Organization B (Organization B = 0; Organizations A and C = 1). R^2 for the first step was .03; for total model it was .07.

bases than harsh power bases, thus replicating results from Study 1.

Descriptive statistics and correlations between variables are presented in Table 6. As can be seen, charismatic leadership was positively and significantly related to soft power bases and OC. The soft power bases were significantly and positively related to OC. Harsh power bases were not significantly related to charismatic leadership and OC.

To further examine the relationship between variables, different multiple regression analyses were conducted. The first analysis examined the level of OC as a function of soft and harsh power bases simultaneously (controlling for organization, represented by two dummy variables: organization A vs. B, C; organization B vs. A, C). Results show that OC was positively and significantly related only to soft power bases ($\beta = .27$; $p < .01$; β for harsh power bases was $-.05$, *ns*), thus replicating results from Study 1.

Based on these results, the mediating role of soft power bases in the relationship between charismatic leadership and OC was tested through multiple regression analyses. In these analyses, organizational commitment scores were regressed

on charismatic leadership and on organization (as control variable) in the first step and both on the charismatic leadership and soft power bases (and on organization, as control variable) in the second step. Results of the last multiple regression analysis (see Table 7) show that the relationship between charismatic leadership and OC was no longer significant ($\beta = .07$, *ns*) when controlling for soft power bases. Importantly, this pattern of results remained the same when controlling for harsh power bases. Using Baron and Kenny's (1986) modification of the Sobel test, the reduction in effect size attributable to soft power bases was significant ($Z = 2.34$, $p < .02$), consistent with our hypothesis of mediating role of bases of social power.

The results of Study 2 were consistent with those obtained in Study 1. Specifically, these results indicate that charismatic leadership style is only positively related to soft power bases. Furthermore, charismatic leadership and soft power bases were both shown to be positively related to OC. Such results indicated that influence of charismatic leaders on their employees tend to be driven by soft power bases, and that compliance with soft power bases influences employees' degree of OC. Consistent with Study 1, results confirmed the mediating role of soft power bases in the relationship between charismatic leadership and OC.

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The aim of the present research was to examine the mechanism through which transformational/charismatic leadership influences employees' affective organizational commitment. Consistent with our theoretical analysis, results indicated that transformational and charismatic leadership styles were both positively and significantly related to employees' willingness to comply with soft power bases, which was related to greater affective organizational commitment. These results provide evidence that compliance with transformational and

charismatic leadership styles is based on soft power bases. Furthermore, these conclusions are consistent with the general conclusions of Schwarzwald and colleagues (2001) that leadership style is a major factor in determining willingness to comply and of Conger and Kanungo (1998) that transformational leaders rely on what we have characterized as the softer bases of power. Additionally, the present research highlights the important role of transformational/charismatic leaders in organizations as they promote greater organizational commitment (Avolio & Bass, 1988, 1995). Knowing that this process occurs through employees' willingness to comply with soft bases of power provides a new understanding of the mechanism at play and "connects the dots" with the existent literature.

Moreover, the mediating role of compliance with soft power bases in the relationship between leadership styles and organizational commitment was confirmed in both studies. The results were obtained through two different measures of charismatic/transformational leadership—MLQ-1 for transformational leadership and CK for charismatic leadership. From a methodological perspective, the fact that these results were obtained in different organizational contexts and with different instruments enhances our confidence in the validity of these findings. From a theoretical perspective, these studies also provide evidence consistent with the contention that charismatic and transformational leadership styles share very similar empirical and theoretical foundations (e.g., Avolio & Bass, 1988; Bass, 1985; Conger & Kanungo, 1998). Although some studies have found that these two styles of leadership share 78% of variance (Rowold & Heinritz, 2007), they may maintain some differences. One such difference was found in Study 1 where the transformational leadership measure was a stronger predictor of affective organizational commitment than the measure of charismatic leadership in Study 2. However, these could be due to sample differences. Another difference was found in Study 1, where only the charisma dimension of transformational leadership (and not individual consideration or intellectual stimulation) predicted compliance with soft power bases and affective organizational commitment. This finding suggests that transformational leadership is a slightly broader concept than charismatic leadership. Future research should further clarify the conceptual distinction between these two constructs by finding specific organizational outcomes predicted by the subdimensions of transformational leadership but not

by charismatic leadership. These issues await future investigation.

It should be noted that these results are not completely consistent with previous research which demonstrated that leadership style is a factor affecting followers' compliance with supervisors' requests (e.g., Schwarzwald et al., 2001). In particular, some research has found that greater willingness to comply with both soft and harsh power bases was associated with high transformational leaders (Schwarzwald et al., 2001), while in the present research these results were supported only in the first study. In our second study, instead, only the compliance with soft power bases was related to charismatic leadership. Moreover, in our first study, when we partialized the relationship between variables, transformational leadership was related only to soft power bases. Perhaps these findings can be explained by the context in which the research took place. Specifically, given that Schwarzwald et al.'s (2001) study took place in a paramilitary organization (police officers and their captains), it could be that compliance with harsh power bases is institutionalized and salient. Thus, it could be that the present findings are contingent on the type of organization, as different organizations may have different norms and expectations with regard to compliance with power bases.

Limitations

It should be noted that Studies 1 and 2 are correlational in nature and therefore do not allow causal inferences. Therefore, further research should substantiate these results using experimental designs. Additionally the present research is limited by its survey method: Asking respondents to judge perception rather than actually examine behavior may produce results different than those of the actual situation and be prone to social desirability bias, although some researchers have shown that common-method bias is generally not strong enough to invalidate the findings (Doty & Glick, 1998).

CONCLUSIONS

Organizational commitment is key to any organization: It promotes performance (Larson & Fukami, 1984) and wellbeing (Begley & Czajka, 1993), and reduces turnover rates (Somers, 1995) which benefit the organization as a whole. Whereas previous research has highlighted the influence of transformational leadership style on

affective organizational commitment (Bass & Avolio, 1994), the present research demonstrates that this phenomenon occurs because transformational leadership style accentuates employees' willingness to comply with soft power bases (but not with harsh ones).

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