

A Cognitive Interpretation of How Perception-Based Decisions Devalue An Individual's Leadership Performance

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Abstract: Structured decision-making is the cornerstone of what defines the practice of reliable, good leadership in the field of business, academics, law enforcement, politics, etc. However, it is unclear whether decisions that incorporate perception are more consistent with negative impact bias outcomes than structured decisions, which rely solely on purpose, options, and results. The objective of this paper is to provide a clear explanation of how the deliberate practice of perception-based decisions detracts from an individual's leadership performance (decision-making and behavior). For example, based on their own cognitive experiences (perceptions), most individuals develop mental representations from the arousal of past subjective, cultural, and oppressive experiences to define and then rely on the subjective concept formations for making a threshold decision. It is here that, the cognitive process underlying the negative impact bias of subjective concept formations often leads to overestimating the consequences of experiences before making a threshold decision. In this paper, it is revealed how perception-based decisions are associated with an increased negative impact bias resulting in a predictable path that often follows with dangerous behavior of verbal, mental, and physical harm. Whereas a structured-based decision had no relationship with bias; suggesting that there are significant differences between perception and structured-based decisions in the practice of leadership decision-making.

Key Words: Perception, Politics, Economics, Performance, Subjective learning, Affective forecasting, Impact bias, Legal, Law, Administration, Focalism, Immune neglect, Working memory, Leadership, Decision-making, Behavior, Nursing, Education, Psychology, Women, Accountability, Military, Economics, Business

I. INTRODUCTION

In the present day, it is essential to identify the level of reasonability an individual has for what is communicated to others (Charron, 2016; Bandura, 2012). With this in mind, research now shows that structured decision-making effectively demonstrates the practice of good leadership by establishing how an individual, no matter in a corporate, law enforcement, political, or educational leadership role, including a leading family role, can now be held responsible for transferring their perception-based performance (decisions-making and behavior) onto others. In addition, because of ongoing organizational transformations and recent changes in political policies and laws, accountability for individual performance now demands specific measurable evidence to challenge the "Reasonable person" standard, (Odwasny, Benjamin & Berkman, 2017; Miller and Perry, 2011), which is now being used to measure the predictable path of a perception-based decision. Fundamentally, we are not just dealing with interpretation issues, but the impact bias in how perception-based decisions detract from a person's leadership performance. This would undoubtedly impact decisions leadership would make as well as the perceived ability to lead. If that is true, bias could dramatically impact all leadership administration, including long-term power. Before I began to study perception and how it detracts from an individual's leadership

performance (decision-making and behavior), I examined the most important question of all; “How do the majority of people define perception” (Jackson, 2011; Braund, 2008)? The debate over the definition of perception and how it is transferred through communication as reliable knowledge, or a reasonable cause to believe in or act on what you heard, requires measuring the impact bias in a person’s narrative to identify the level of competence within their subjective views. It is here that most definitions of “perception and competence fall somewhere between two extremes: Competence as a universal attribute, such as literacy, and perception in terms of individual reasoning” (Hodkinson & Issitt, 1995).

II. THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this paper is to explain how perception-based decisions follow a predictable path. The purpose of doing so is to explore the detrimental social and mental hygienic impact such decisions have and will have on the future of our society (Keeney, and Raiffa, 1976). More essential, research now shows that perception-based decisions often negatively influence an individual’s self-awareness, self-regulation, and competence (Mangham, (1986) beyond the “reasonable person” standard, which is the legal precedent that can be used to measure the impact of an individual’s threshold decision-making choice.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

This paper was written using the inspired 2018 study of Dr. Vincent Jemison, titled: *A narrative inquiry of the perceptions leading to the under-representation of women's political leadership*. Jemison’s study focused on the experiences of elected women’s political leaders and identified a host of the “Deliberate Practice” of perception-based decision choices and discourse that negatively shaped women’s ability to achieve electoral leadership in the state of Texas. This qualitative, narrative inquiry study explored themes from the lived experiences of elected women leaders of Texas to understand what compelled them to enter into politics, and the challenges, and barriers faced during their experiences. In addition, how these women processed the “Deliberate Practice” of shifts in the perception of their electability to rise through the political ranks to become elected leaders. The study has added to the current body of knowledge on strategic factors, hindrances, challenges, barriers, and support for women serving and aspiring to serve in political leadership positions.

Deliberate Practice

According to Ericsson (2008) “Deliberate Practice” (DP) identifies the two types of threshold decisions (perception-based and structured-based). It is here that, “Deliberate Practice” refers to the practice of threshold decision-making that is seen as purposeful and organized. While the practice of a threshold decision that relies on perception might include mindless repetitions, deliberate practice of a threshold decision that is “structured based” requires focused attention and is delivered with the specific goal of improving performance and good leadership.

Deconstructing the Transfer of Perception

The extant literature reviewed for this paper provided supporting research on how subconscious decision choice is often based on an individual’s perception when making a threshold decision. Some researchers now believe that such subconscious decision choices are often stimulated and aroused on the bases of contempt towards another person and often influenced by focalism. According to Lam, Buehler, McFarland, Ross & Cheung (2005), Focalism is the “Tendency for a person to give too much weight to one specific piece of information when making a judgment or

prediction.” In other words, focalism causes a person to concentrate solely on a specific subconscious past event when making a threshold decision, and as a result, often fails to realize that an arising event in their lives may be influenced by the arousal from that past event” (Wilson, Wheatley, Meyers, Gilbert, & Axson, 2000). Focalism in decision-making often “occurs when an individual is focusing on the emotional impact of a positive or negative experience. Thus, reviewing the full narrative of the new experience could explain affective decision-making forecasting errors observed across a wide range of past performances.”

As January 6, 2022, insurrection event demonstrated, the deliberate transfer of communicated perception-based decisions has become more evident in our society, recognizing the contempt and predictable path such decisions follow is becoming more evident. With this in mind, research now shows that deconstructing the narratives captured from such transfers is critically necessary to establish the culpability and negative path that often follows a perception-based decision choice (Derrida, 2004; Gretzel, Xiang, Wöber, & Fesenmaier, 2008). How is culpability established? The process would first begin by pinning down which energy model (displaced thought process), (i.e., agitation, toleration, resonance, acceleration, and resonance) is most signified in the individual’s captured narrative. The next phase of establishing a sound argument to prove culpability is then to discover how the contemptible actions captured in an individual’s narrative were stimulated by the arousing and harmful performance that followed the predictable path suggested in this paper (Tosey, Visser, and Saunders, 2012).

The aforementioned event is a prime example of how “Focalism” stimulates and arouses “dangerous behavior” (Lee, Donnelly, Cohen, et al, 2016) that often results in the harmful predictable path that follows all perception-based decisions in the form of cruel verbal, mental, and even physical harm. (Leakman, Panter-Brick, and Saleh 2014). It is here that because a “Perception-based decision has been found to lead to developmental psychosomatic harmful thought patterns when transferred, often follows a predictable path of (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005) of verbal, mental, and even physical violence ...” (Gentes and Ruscio, 2015). With this in mind, Veltman and Piper (2014) suggested for example, when political leaders transfer their perception onto their base followers stimulates psychosomatic arousal that can be overt or conducted deceitfully without the influenced person(s) knowing they are being influenced. Herek, Gillis, and Cogan (2009) argued that when an individual is being psychosomatically influenced, the individual is often relying upon their “working memory” (Logie and Cowan, 2015) and internalized perceptions of what is being communicated to them.

In other words, a psychosomatic influencer can be “observed in cases where the influencer communicates to their base followers, those who oppose them do not conform to the internal and the external expectations or controls of a dominant group” (Herek, Gillis, and Cogan 2009, p. 436). According to Postmes and Smith (2009), a good example of an individual practicing mind control over others is when mainstream members of society support obvious and blatant negative rhetoric of verbal or mental judgment on others and approve of the action(s) and behavior it represents. For example, failure to punish race-related hate speech (Schneider & Bos 2014; Killen, Rutland, & Jampol, 2008). Logie and Cowan (2015) noted, “Working memory is needed for both our understanding of personal problems and how we process solutions to those problems, for both acting in and navigating around the situations, and for both the comprehension and production of reasonable knowledge and decision-making.” Further, because working memory is often internally manifested in different ways when stimulated by mental arousal research now shows should also be measured based on the predictable path that followed such manifestations.

IV. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework of the study focuses on the importance of measuring the cognitive influence of threshold perception-based decision choices and how such decision choices often devalue an individual's leadership performance. To start the measuring process, channeling the influence Focalism has on a threshold decision choice. According to Lam, Buehler, McFarland, Ross & Cheung (2005) "Focalism is considered unambiguous and is an easy go-to cognitive decision choice before making subjective concept formations. With this in mind, Maddux (2018), suggested that "Subjective concept formation is subjective is based on personal opinions and feelings rather than on facts." In other words, focalism makes making a perception-based decision comfortable and is often relied on when making a threshold of decision. Some researchers now believe that the cognitive stronghold of focalism can be corrected to some degree. This is done by asking an individual to think carefully about past threshold decisions that were perception-based and often relied upon to make future decisions and how some or all of those decisions could have been structured-based.

It is here that some researchers now suggest that the "influence and reliance on of focalism in threshold decision-making often leads individuals to underestimate the extent to which the transfer of theirs and someone else's perception may have on their thoughts and actions" (Wilson & Gilbert, 2003). With this in mind, the study used to draft this paper was grounded in the participant's narratives, which supported the use of applying Jacque Derrida's deconstruction theory to measure the cognitive impact bias in a person's full narrative. In other words, the application of Derrida's deconstruction theory was used to confirm the saturation of signifiers identified within participant's narratives of Jemison's 2018, study (Folta, Seguin, Ackerman, and Nelson, 2012; Braun, Peus, Weisweiler, and Frey, 2012; Saldana, 2013; Hannum, Martineau, and Reinelt, 2007; Luoma and Voltero, 2002).

Deconstruction Theory

Jemison's 2018 study provided first-hand real-life examples of why it is purposely necessary to draw from Jacque Derrida's deconstruction theory when it comes to measuring an individual's narrative. The data from Jemison's research was used in this paper to maximize the influences of focalism and the impact bias of a displaced thought process to analyze how perception-based decisions can devalue an individual's leadership performance (Bauer, Suerdem, & Biquelet, 2014). In contrast, Brown (2013) noted, it can be risky to handle any person's full narrative based on the delivery of absolute reality. Bauer, Suerdem, and Biquelet (2014) cautioned, "Analytical methods for deconstructing stories into coded piles could undermine the aims of narrative inquiry research because stories often direct attention away from thinking exclusively about the impact of an individual's threshold decision experience(s)."

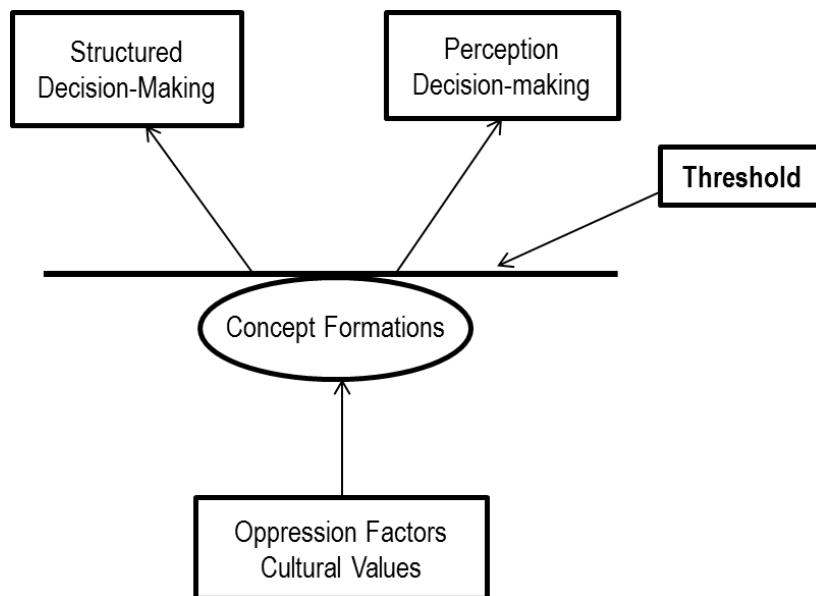
It is here that Derrida's deconstruction theory suggested that any form of discourse from an individual's story could lead to the discovery of misleading experiences that if not defined or measured properly produce an incoherent narrative. For example, attempting to deconstruct a man's speech about abortion and its impact on women's health without recording his subjective full narrative on abortion. What the deconstruction process in the above example is intended to identify is how and which displaced thought process(s) could be implied in a person's narrative: The goal here is to measure the individual's intent, influence, and or culpability (if required) (Gretzel, Xiang, Wöber, & Fesenmaier, 2008).

V. METHODOLOGY

Led by narrative inquiry design and qualitative methodology, Jemison’s study was conducted with eight purposively selected women political leaders to explore how the intensity of the shifts in perception negatively influenced their leadership performance (Clandinin, 2014; Chiu, Gelfand, Yamagishi, Shteynerg, & Wan, 2010). The principal advantage of using a small purposive sample of individuals yielded detailed, rich, thick narratives from each participant. The participants of the study all shared their personal and leadership experiences and were equally concerned with the question of how, not whether, to optimize their leadership performance. The goal was to provide recommendations for the next generation of women leaders to develop and deliver definable methods to measure individual leadership performance that would reduce the reliance on perception-based decision-making. What we see from the intersection threshold “Learning System” map below, is that after an individual leverages their cultural beliefs and oppressive factors, arousing concepts are formed from subconscious and impact biases from past experiences.

The benefits of being able to measure the intensity of perception-based leadership decisions are that the findings will essentially identify the cognitive displaced thought process(s) arousing the subconscious psychosomatic response that inspired perception-based decisions, which often follow a predictable path. What can be achieved from the results of measuring the intensity of a perception-based decision will not only explain how individuals rely on their perception to justify their beliefs, and behavior, but the decision choice and action taken in a given situation (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005). The findings of Jemison’s study also suggested that because most individuals have come to rely on their perception to make leadership decisions, such decision-making causes more mental anguish and anxiety required from an experience. The goal here is to be able to properly measure an individual’s perception-based decision(s), which is very important to achieving accountability and fairness when applying the “reasonable person’s” precedence in an individual’s decision that has been discovered to have followed a predictable path.

Table 1: Learning System Map



The individuals participating in this Jemison's study also revealed how their upbringing (cultural values) and often experienced oppressive factors were two of the main components they frequently leaned on to form their leadership reasoning; and when acted upon often resulted in decision-making that was hasty and based on their perceptions and the perceptions of someone else. The Learning System map (shown in Table 1 above) shows that there are two types of threshold leadership decision-making options and how they are formed.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the study suggested, when you think of leadership, you often think about developing your or someone else's leadership skills. With this in mind, one often considers, "What does it mean to be a good leader," "What makes a great leader," "What are the personal traits of a good leader," or "What are the characteristics of a good leader," and the list goes on. These questions have been turned into some great-selling books, seminars, and podcasts. However, after an extant literature review, very few books, seminars, podcasts, and studies have been conducted on the cognitive interpretation of how perception-based decisions detract from an individual's leadership performance (decision-making and behavior). One main assumption of Jemison's study was if, at all, structured-based threshold decisions are different from perception-based decisions.

The method of achieving the results of the study was by deconstructing the narratives of each participant to understand and identify how often and which participants relied on making perception-based threshold decisions over structured-based decisions in their deliberate leadership practice leadership. For instance, it did become clear in each participant's narrative when and why the deliberate practice of perception-based decision-making began to take shape in their leadership approach, strategies, and actions. Folkman and Lazarus, (1985) noted that "One possible explanation, in how perception-based decision detract and shape an individual's leadership performance is that people vary as to whether they see challenging experiences as having the potential for growth and mastery, or the potential for personal harm or loss." The objective here is to ultimately determine, what the individual gained from their experiences. With this in mind, Black, Gregersen, and Mendenhall, (1992) noted that "Future research that investigates the personal and situational factors that explain the differences in threshold leadership decision-making would aid in organizations developing advance leadership training intended to reduce the reliance deliberate practice of perception-based decision making in the workplace." It was also discovered during the study that, unlike perception-based decisions, structured-based decisions are framed around the three principles of leadership; managing your purpose, identifying intentional options, and forecasting results, which establishes the "reasonable person" precedence validity, objectivity, and competence of the individual's decision(s).

The results of the study also identified five leadership themes that could be used to develop future leadership training to optimize individual leadership performance. The first leadership theme identified, offered insight into the participant's understanding of the origin of their knowledge base and leadership approach. The second theme described leadership strategies practiced by the participants that were open, honest, and communicative. The third theme focused on transparency, and personal development designed to shape their leadership performance. The fourth theme was driven by the structured decision-making that was observed and communicated based on an individual's observed family values and any oppressive factors experienced. The final theme centered on identifying the value of measuring the influences embodied perceptions have on detracting an individual's leadership performance. For instance, how a displaced thought process

such as agitation, and or tolerance can arouse the transfer of one's perception, and later reciprocated into a perception-based decision(s) that follows a deliberate predictable path (Hatfield, 2012; Chemero, 2013; Barton, 2012).

- **Theme 1: Leadership Approach.** The majority of participants were forthcoming about the limits of their knowledge base when it came to their initial leadership approach. The findings revealed how each participant now desired to practice the principles of structured leadership decision-making over perception, to deliver selfless leadership governance and become more effective professional leadership practitioners (Boje, Helmuth, & Saylor, 2013a). Using Jacques Derrida's deconstruction analysis to fully explore the participant's narratives, which identified how some of the cognitive representations aroused from their subjective perception-based decisions were often delivered in their leadership approach (Olendzki, 2011). The express reason for needing to know how shifts in perception can shape and detract from an individual's performance was to show how negative external discursive constraints of perception are often transferred and imposed on women through dominating male rhetoric (Sutherland, Breen, & Lewis, 2013). If a leader relies on making hasty responses, this can set off a series of chain reactions that magnify the damage of small mistakes in their leadership approach (Sokol-Hessner & Phelps, 2016). Perception can shape beliefs, and many people mistakenly believe that their judgments are sound, even if false premises and offensive behavior and habits follow.
- **Theme 2: Leadership Strategies.** The leadership strategies and approaches identified during the transcription of the participant's narratives and later confirmed through member checks were identified as open, honest, and communicative. Participant 3 echoed this sentiment and said, "The center of her leadership strategy is her strong work ethic." Each participant felt the same about their expectations of the individuals working in their district. Several of the participants were accountable for large political districts with a multitude of responsibilities. The remaining participants noted that they sincerely relied on the expertise of those with whom they work, and often supervise. Participant 1 suggested that it is unrealistic to think that one person knows everything about all aspects of their leadership realm. All the participants found that the practice of a structural, transformational leadership strategy allowed them to function with other experts in areas of great demand without having to know everything. The fact that the participants readily accepted the limits to how much they could (and should) know follows the tenets of how the participants of the study desired to balance, process, and act against the communicated perceptions from others (Goldstein, 2014). The participants also revealed during the interview sessions that each of them incorporated authentic actionable leadership into their leadership strategies.
- **Theme 3: Leadership Development.** All of the participants emphatically shared how they incorporated the same determination into their leadership strategies and approaches as they had in their leadership development. The women also shared the significance of being observed as integral practicing transparent leaders. Transparency, a key leadership quality, as the women expressed during each interview session, helped them recognize how other women leaders before them processed and acted against shifting perceptions derived from discursive rhetoric and discrimination (Sutherland, Breen, & Lewis, 2013). They also expressed how each of them sought to practice genuine transparency, in the hope that others under their leadership would follow suit. The women appeared confidently aware of the visibility of their leadership position and even though their decision-making choices were

always being watched, scrutinized, and often fueled by subjective perceptions, they boldly endeavored to always lead by example.

- **Theme 4: Structured Decision-Making.** The participants specifically stated that they learned to distinguish the difference between structured and perception-based decision-making through their upbringing and observed and communicated family values. Participant 2 stated that women must come to rely on structured decision-making practice and hold firm to the principles of this practice. Participant 2 also shared that leadership decision-making was personal, and therefore, she learned to lead according to the experiences learned from her family values (Lichtenstein, 2012) and through all forms of leadership development opportunities. The participants all echoed that, family and the structured values learned through lived experiences are looked upon as significant traits used in their practice of good leadership governance. During each interview session, all of the participants were very clear about how they strived to value making informed decisions when attempting to carry out strategic leadership and management plans (Landrum, Gardner, & Boke, 2013; Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2005).
- **Theme 5: Embodied Perceptions.** The findings of this study revealed how most of the participants managed the embodied perceptions of their leadership performance (Gawronski & Bodenhausen, 2015). Examples of the type of leaders who would benefit from recognizing the value of measuring their embodied perceptions when it comes to decision-making are police officers, political and organizational leaders, and corporate managers. Doherty (2014), noted that managers, leaders, and other change agents in the workplace must be knowledgeable and sensitive to the issues and challenges faced by women and other marginalized groups (Fraser and MacDougall, 2016; Bissessar, 2014). The question then becomes, at what point from the example above are embodied perceptions used to influence individual performance, especially when engaged in situations of uncertainty (Tenbrink & Taylor, 2015; Chemero, 2013)?

Overall, half of the participants admitted that they often engaged in perception-based decision-making, while the other half consciously attempted to reduce their perceptions when making decisions. The transcribed participant narratives confirmed just how the intensity of perception could detract and internally affect the competence of an individual's leadership decision-making ability. These results could be translated into organization-wide and community settings in several ways. In retrospect, Senge (1990a) identified two conditions used to measure the intensity that follows a perception-based decision: 1) an individual must suspend their perceived assumptions, especially when engaged in situations of uncertainty, and 2) an individual must make a connection with the other person being perceived. Prospectively, Hochman, Ayal, and Glockner, (2010) noted, when individuals make decisions based on a past subconscious (subjective) experience, there is a "necessary" demand for measuring the individual's narrative to every extent to identify the level of mental arousal and displaced thought process that was triggered to make the decision (Sharot, Delgado, & Phelps, 2004).

VII. FINDINGS

The data analysis and assessment used to identify the themes were achieved through thematic analysis and NVivo11™ qualitative data analysis software. The data analysis was achieved through saturation, which guided this study and ensured the trustworthiness of using the qualitative

methodology. The primary data analyzed for this study were the transcribed narratives from the participant's interviews, and field notes (Robert & Shenhav, 2014). The collected data revealed repeated themes from saturation based on the participant's experiences and later recognized in the study's findings (Birchall, 2014; Saldana, 2013). As the themes repeated, the data was connected and then associated with the leadership themes as likely influences of facts arose throughout the participant's stories. As a result, after the assembly of the participant's narratives, emerging themes were discovered during the interview sessions as recommended by (Hesse-Biber, 2013).

In addition, triangulation analyses along with a combination of the literature review and synthesis of participant experiences were used to discover patterns and themes from the participant's stories (Marshall & Rossman, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). The reason to code the transcribed data was to reflect the source of the meaning, description, and explanation for the emerging themes (Saldana, 2013). In addition, the induction process allowed the researcher to analyze and sort the data into related text groupings, which were used to identify themes and associations between the groupings (Saldana, 2013). However, the overarching aim for such extensive analysis of the data was to obtain answers to the main research question and sub-questions, discover emerging themes, and more essential, document the lived experiences of professional women in the study (Gill, 2015; Saldana, 2013). The grouping, organizing, and retelling of the narrative data into themes occurred throughout the entire data collection process (Gill, 2015).

Deconstructing the collected data was performed by singling-out words and sentences that were expressed multiple times (Yegen & Abukan, 2014). The reflective writing style was simulated during the process of deconstructing the collected data (Gibton, 2015; van Manen, 2014). Overall, the aim during data analysis of the collected data was to learn and gain significant information from the participants to form groupings related to themes that support the research questions and study findings that purposely excluded any form of gossip when restoring the participant narratives during member checks (Monk & Winslade, 2013). As a result, the core of collective facts signified the essential significance of the impact bias shifts in perceptions influenced the participant's leadership experiences (Cunliffe & Hibbert, 2016; Saldana, 2013). Therefore, the population size was small enough to attain saturation at a faster pace than with a large population. Systematically organizing the interview recordings and then deconstructing the transcribed narratives and field notes contributed to the findings of this study.

VIII. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings from Jemison's study, this paper expands on his theories to demonstrate that it is now plausible to measure the predictable path of perception-based decisions. The urgent importance of researching how perception-based decisions detract from your performance is because today the deliberate practice of transferring one's perceptions to their base followers, for example, is being reciprocated in the form of dangerous behavior in our society more than ever. This reciprocated dangerous behavior is all around us and is not hidden from our sight any longer. The question becomes, "Does measuring the intensity of perception-based decisions that follows a predictable path contribute to improving social change? And will this ability provide the legal means to hold an individual accountable for the transferring their perceptions unto others that were then reciprocated in the form of verbal, mental, and physical harm?"

By and large, this paper provides a clear explanation of how threshold structured-based decisions optimize (enhance) the outcome of a threshold decision choice. This paper adds to the literature

on leadership development to inform and help develop tools focused on the deliberate practice of threshold structured decision choices, including the advancement of high-level theories that can be used in legal, managerial, and psychology studies. Overall, it should be clear that measuring the intensity of perception “might not be able to correct all of the dangerous behavior that follows the transfer of someone’s perception onto another that was then reciprocated,” but it is plausible now that researchers, attorneys, etc... can argue, “A perception-based decision choice has been discovered to follow a predictable path.”

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