

The Forgotten Followers of Toxic Leadership

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The Toxic Triangle

The toxic triangle model offers two categories of susceptible followers, *colluders and conformers*. I believe there are two subcategories of conformers

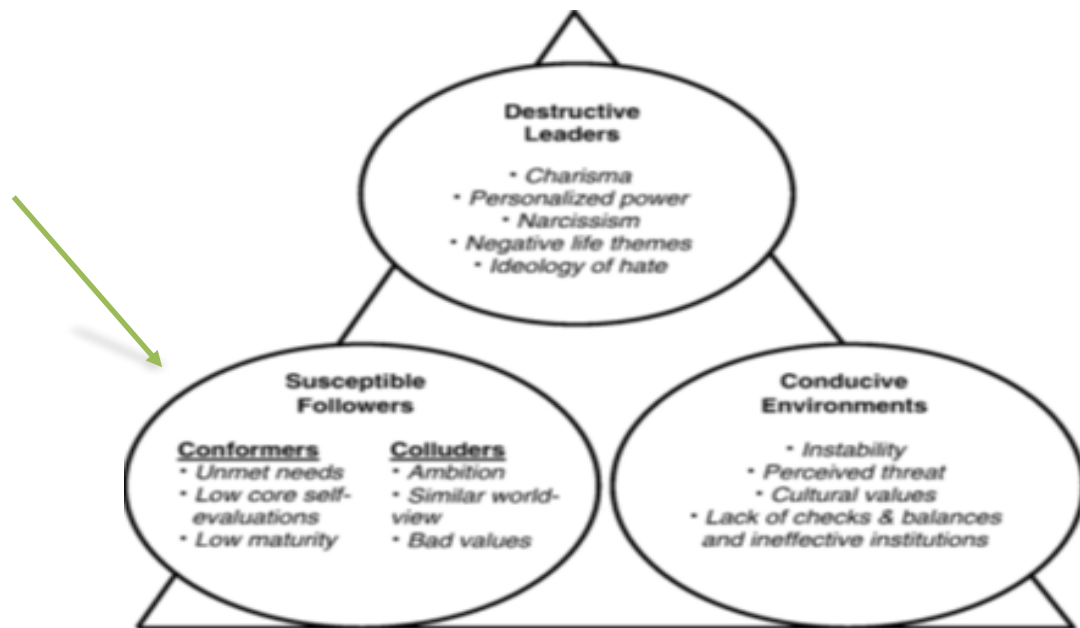


Figure One: Adapted from Padilla, A. B., Hogan, R. B., & Kaiser, R. B. (2007). The toxic triangle: Destructive leaders, susceptible followers, and conducive environments. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 18, 176-194. doi:10.1.1.322.4077&rep=rep1&type=pdf

The Relationship of Followers to the Toxic Leader (TL)

- Colluders
 - Support the toxic leader
 - Selfish; thirsty for power
 - Will collude if that benefits the follower

- Conformers
 - Look to the leader for “protection”*
 - Low self-esteem*
 - Fear consequences more than the leader*

Identifying the Gap

- ❑ Followers are aware of their predicament but have no choice. (Webster et al., 2016). The toxic leader is aware of their effects, but do not aim to harm the organization (Chen et al., 2019).
- ❑ Lack of accountability for the TL isolates the followers (Bakkal et al., 2019).
- ❑ Padilla's et al. (2007) model addresses colluders and conformers but does not explain what happens to the others.
- ❑ Only way to defeat toxic leadership is to battle back – someone must stand up, falling outside the two types of followers (Lipman-Blumen, 2005; Schmidt, 2014; Beightel, 2018; Decoster et al., 2021; Einarsen et al., 2007; Blanchard et al., 2009).
- ❑ The Toxic Triangle relies on unpredictability, in contrast to transformational leadership (Schmidt, 2008).
- ❑ Some caution about only two follower categories (Hoption et al., 2012). Others want to eliminate the labels (Bell, 2020).

A New Model

This new model hopefully stimulates more research from different approaches, such as what if the Padilla's model were viewed with two subcategories of conformers?

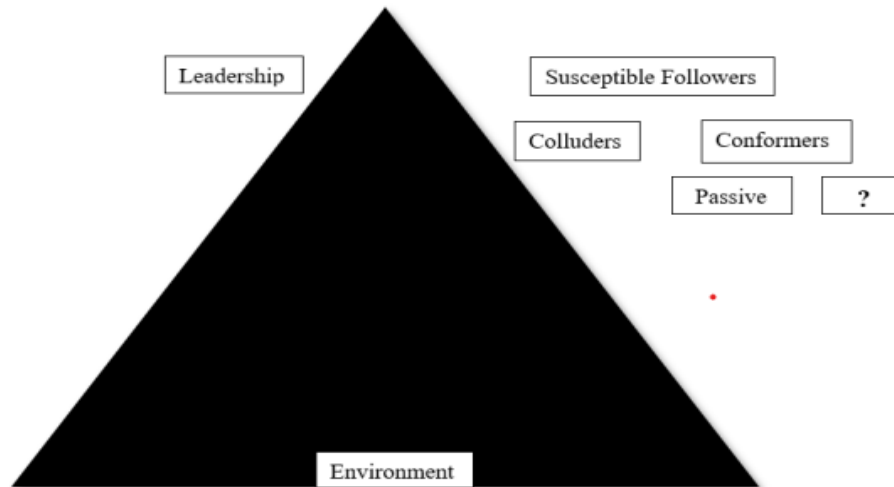


Figure Two: Conceptual Model adapted from Padilla, A. B., Hogan, R. B., & Kaiser, R. B. (2007). The toxic triangle: Destructive leaders, susceptible followers, and conducive environments. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 18, 176-194. doi:10.1.1.322.4077&rep=rep1&type=pdf

Questions?

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