

Neglected side of
leadership
phenomenon the
followers
management essay



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Much has been said about leadership. From the organizational leaders, supervisory leaders, team leaders, political leaders, religious leaders and the name can be given to any role. The most neglected aspect is the one which is named follower and the one who makes the leader worthwhile. In the most concrete and obvious term leader and follower are the two sides of a single hand. Followership, on the other hand, is rarely brought up when leadership is being discussed, in spite of its obvious importance in the grand leadership plan (Kelley, 1988). Leadership is not one-dimensional; leadership is system thinking in multiple dimensions. In terms of systems thinking, the inclusion of organizational performers (followers) in the leadership process complements the notion that leaders are only responsible for about 20% of the work that is completed in an organization (Kelley, 1992). This paper is about exploring the importance of followers in the leadership phenomenon.

Leadership:

Leadership is the combination of tangible skills and personality to motivate people to accomplish goals. The focus of leadership is to direct organizational performers to accomplish organizational goals in an effective and timely manner. The characteristics of leadership include goals and values. As stated by Burns (1978), leadership is “. . . inducing followers to act for certain goals that represent the values and the motivations - the wants and needs, the aspirations and expectations- of both leader and followers” (p. 19).

Followership:

Organizations exist in every form of society and are prevalent in the basic day-to-day operations of life (Kelley, 1992) and definitions of organizations vary in many ways. Barnard (1938) defined an organization as “[a] system of consciously coordinated activities or forces of two or more persons” (p. 81). The combination of two or more persons working together implies the leader-follower scheme exists and, as with leadership styles, followers’ exhibit styles of followership.

The leader-member exchange model:

The leader-member exchange (LMX) model has been offered by Graen and his colleagues (e. g., Graen & Wakabayashi, 1994) as an alternative approach to the study of leadership. In contrast to traditional models that imply that a leader exhibits a similar leadership style toward all members of a work group, the LMX model suggests that leaders may develop different types of relations with different members of the same work group. In this respect, the model depicts leader-follower relations (exchanges) as existing on a continuum ranging from high to low quality.

The leader member exchange model proposed four grounds on which leader and follower interacts these are Attitudinal Similarity.

Similarity is one of the most central theoretical and empirical constructs in cognitive psychology (Medin, Goldstone, & Gentner, 1993). Within the field of management, the similarity-attraction effect provides the conceptual foundation for much research on organizational demography (Tsui, Egan, & O’Reilly, 1992). The LMX model suggests that attitudinal similarity is an

important influence on leader and follower interactions, being a prime determinant of successful ongoing relationship.

Introversion and Extraversion:

Years of research have convinced many investigators that the twin constructs of introversion and extraversion are a central dimension of personality (McCrae & John, 1992). Introversion/extraversion is a broad dimension that deals with the interpersonal activity so important in leader-follower relations. To the extent that the LMX model suggests that followers are able to influence the quality of their interactions with leaders, it is possible that extraverted followers, seeking interpersonal relations, would attempt a high level of inter-action with leaders not only to gain the satisfaction of interacting, but also to enhance the possibility of being assigned stimulating tasks. Such behavior corresponds closely with that underlying high-quality leader-follower exchange.

Locus of Control:

Research has repeatedly shown locus of control to be an important construct for explaining workplace behavior (Spector, 1982). Individuals with an internal locus of control generally feel that they can control events in their lives and perceive personal initiative to be largely instrumental in attaining success. In contrast, individuals who generally feel that outside or environmental forces determine what happens in their lives, who are said to have an external locus of control, ascribe little or no value to initiative because they view success as to some extent unrelated to effort. Of interest here is the tendency of those with an internal locus of control (henceforth, <https://assignbuster.com/neglected-side-of-leadership-phenomenon-the-followers-management-essay/>

internals) regarding situational control (Strickland, 1989). That is, because internals believe they can control a work setting through their own initiative and independence of action, they should attempt to achieve more control than do externals if they believe the control will lead to desired outcomes. Thus, as Spector (1982) predicted and Blau (1993) reported internals will probably attempt to control performance outcomes via initiative based rather than compliant behaviors. Initiative-based behaviors could include attempting negotiations relating to operating procedures and policies, work assignments, working conditions, and work schedules. In the leader member exchange model, such leader-follower negotiation is characteristic of high-quality exchanges.

Growth Need Strength

Growth need strength is a personal attribute that concerns a person's desire to grow and develop as an individual. As an explanatory construct, growth need strength is a central concept in understanding the influence of job characteristics (Kulik & Oldham, 1988). Graen and Scandura (1987) contended that having some work group members with job-growth potential (ability) and the motivation to accept challenges beyond their job descriptions contributes to the success of leader-follower exchanges.

These four dimensions of personality through leader member exchange model depict the importance of relationship between leader and follower. Through empirical findings it was clear that whenever leader and follower have a balance in their personality outcomes are more significant.

Kelly's style of follower ship:

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Leader and follower are the two sides of same domain which is how to get best out of circumstances. The relationship between follower and leader exists and cannot be denied. As leader exhibits styles so the follower also exhibits style.

Kelley (1992) defined followership styles as “exemplary . . . alienated . . . conformist . . . pragmatist . . . and passive” (p. 97). These styles constitute the basis of the Kelley followership model and relate the followership styles to individual personality attributes in terms of thinking and acting in organizations. Individual thinking attributes are (a) independent critical, (b) dependent critical, (c) active, or (d) passive. These thinking attributes, like the styles of followership and leadership, give dimension to the philosophical notion of followership.

Alienated followers are mavericks who have a healthy skepticism of the organization. They are capable, but cynical.

Conformist followers are the “yes people” of the organizations. They are very active at doing the organization’s work and will actively follow orders.

Passive followers rely on leaders to do the thinking for them. They also require constant direction.

Exemplary followers are independent, innovative, and willing to question leadership. This type of follower is critical to organizational success.

The Leadership-Exemplary Followership Exchange Model:

Exemplary Followership:

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The style of followership coined by Kelly provides the philosophical basis for followership research. The exemplary followers are the one who makes leaders effective.

Banutu-Gomez (2004) stated that “ To succeed, leaders must teach their followers not only how to lead: leadership, but more importantly, how to be a good follower: followership” (p. 143). Schaubroeck and Lam (2002) stated, “ Regardless of work unit individualism/collectivism, supervisors were more likely to form trusting, high-commitment [relationships] with subordinates who were similar to them in personality” (p. 1132). This statement supports Johnson’s (2003) conclusion that “. . . followership modality variation . . . revealed that followers generally reflect modality that corresponds with the leaders’ style and behavior” (p. 110). Johnson’s conclusion and Banutu-Gomez’s contention that leaders must teach their followers to be good followers, displays a connection to Kelley’s (1992) notion that exemplary followership can be taught. To develop exemplary followership, leaders must educate organizational performers to become exemplary followers by demonstrating the exemplary followership attributes as developed by Kelley.

The following 15 attributes define exemplary followership. Exemplary followers, according to Kelley (1992),

1. Think for themselves
2. Go above and beyond the job
3. Support the team and the leader
4. Focus on the goal

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5. Do an exceptional job on critical path activities related to the goal
6. Take initiative on increasing their value to the organization
7. Realize they add value by being who they are, their experiences and ideals
8. Structure their daily work and day-to-day activities
9. See clearly how their job relates to the enterprise
10. Put themselves on the critical path toward accomplishment
11. Make sure the tasks they are to perform are on the critical path
12. Review their progress daily or weekly
13. Increase their scope of critical path activities
14. Develop additional expertise
15. Champion new ideas. (pp. 126-166)

Relationships and Culture

Building relationships while identifying with the leader of an organization and their vision is essential to good followership. Jehn and Bezrukova (2003) contended that followership is a people oriented behavior, and this behavior builds relationships between leaders and other followers, providing an environment that promotes all organizational members to focus on a common goal. Jehn and Bezrukova suggested that good followers may be a

catalyst for change in an organization as followership “ Inspires others to follow toward a common goal; creates enthusiasm and desire to excel; fully engages others; builds confidence; moves the organization ahead as one entity rather than separate parts” (p. 728).

As relationships are important between leaders and followers, the quality of these relationships are equally important factors in developing an organizational culture of followers who maintain the characteristics that promote good followership. Werlin (2002) contended that good followership relationships must build on motivation rather than control, and that instilling values into followers is essential to developing a culture of trust and good relationships. The balance of power between leader and follower; however, must be maintained in order to provide a culture of openness that promotes self-engagement.

A good relationship between followership to leadership requires that both leader and follower share elements of each (Schruijer & Vansina, 2002). Schruijer and Vansina contended that the characteristics of leaders and followers define the relationship that becomes followership and leadership. Wong (2003) contended that organizational cultures must involve and value all members of the organization, and that the characteristics of all members define the roles of leaders and followers. The identification and sharing of roles lead to LEX.

Transformational Leadership and Followership

Bass (1990) suggested the implementation of transformational leadership could change followers into leaders. Humphreys and Einstein (2004) <https://assignbuster.com/neglected-side-of-leadership-phenomenon-the-followers-management-essay/>

contended that transformational leadership could motivate followers to be self-directing and increase follower performance. Changing followers to become self-motivated, self-directive and a leader from within is consistent with Kelley's (1992) exemplary followership style. These examples from the literature fall short of explaining the perceptions these followers have of the change from the follower perspective, as the perspective is consistently from the leader's point of view. Dvir, Eden, Avolio, and Shamir, (2002) longitudinal field study attempted to examine follower development as opposed to leader development in terms of followership, but the result of Dvir et al.'s study contended that transformational leadership improves a follower's ability to think for themselves, thus continuing the theme that leadership makes the follower. However, exchanges of roles between leader and follower aid in the development of motivation and trust to form the LFX.

Leader Follower Roles

Townsend (2002) contended that the roles of leaders and followers change from that of follower to leader and back again, depending on the situation and demands of the organization. At times, followers can determine their faith in this role reversion, but other times, leadership must inspire the followers to be followers and eventually leaders (Jehn & Bezrukova, 2003). Jabnoun, Juma, and Rasasi (2005) found that charismatic leaders are able to instill a sense of purpose and vision in followers who will inspire the followers to identify with the leader. Identification with the leader's vision is essential to motivating and inspiring followers to lead.

Active Engagement

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Solovy (2005) stated, " Exemplary followers work beyond the expected to produce exemplary results" (p. 32). This statement provides an element of active engagement of exemplary followership, and a review of the literature (Dvir & Shamir, 2003; Johnson, 2003; Petrusch, 2002; Solovy, 2005) pertaining to followership and active engagement has yielded a connection between active engagement and followership. In a longitudinal study, Dvir and Shamir found that " collectivistic orientation, critical-independent approach, [to follower development] active engagement in the task, and self-efficacy, positively predicted transformational leadership among indirect followers" (p. 327)

Theories by Kelley (1992), Barnard (1938), and Chaleff (2003) implied that good followers actively engage and think for themselves. This supports the relationship between active engagement and followership in a way that complements the theories. The systems that support follower active engagement remain diverse in the developmental process, leader influence; individual performer character, learning, and the follower understanding of their role in an organization are key factors in developing a good followership mentality that supports active engagement. To implement change in an organization, the exemplary follower must understand transformational change and the role the follower has in transformation.

Both leadership philosophies of Kelley (1992) and Barnard (1938) emphasize teams as well as informal and formal organizations. Barnard's philosophy contends that an organization ". . . is a system composed of the activities of human beings" (p. 77). This is in essence a team, and as stated by Barnard's observation that cooperation is essential for an organization to function, <https://assignbuster.com/neglected-side-of-leadership-phenomenon-the-followers-management-essay/>

suggests the notion of teamwork. This realization of cooperative systems is a germinal element of teaming and an integral part of followership. In comparison, Kelley (1992) embraced teaming as a component of followership. Followership promotes self-reliance among team members, and this self-reliance provides leaders with less need to lead and thus, develops followership (Kelley).

A model for Leadership-Followership Exchanges

As long as there have been leaders, there have been followers, and leaders cannot accomplish what they do without followers (Kelley, 1992). Newell (2002) suggested that a growing trend in leadership is to inspire followership, and to this end, coaching and mentoring leaders to transform their followers into good followers is essential in today's business environments. Managers must participate actively in the forming of good follower relationships (Vince, 2002) if managers are to benefit from the Leader-Follower Exchanges that promote sharing organizational goals consistent with enterprise wide vision and values. Figure 1 the Leadership-Exemplary Followership Exchange model illustrates the cycle of leadership-Exemplary Followership Exchanges based on relationships and culture, transformational leadership and followership, leader follower roles, active engagement, and development of exemplary followership as defined by Kelley (1992).

The concept developed by the LEX model provides for a culture of organizational leadership that originates from the bottom up. Relationships developed between leaders and followers must be open to dialogue

regarding the vision of the organization. Shared vision between leaders and followers will develop a culture of trust and lead to active engagement of followers. Leaders must educate follower to be exemplary followers and as such, provide followers with a sense of confidence that they have the knowledge to lead themselves as an active engaged member of the organization.

This model provides a cycle of relationship between leader and follower. It presents a framework for the exemplary followers to become leaders in the future.

Overcoming Adversity: The Impact of Leadership Attributes or Traits

1. Honesty or integrity
2. A high level of people skills
3. Initiative, assertiveness, drive, or determination
4. Excellent communication skills or willingness to speak up, take a Position, or take charge
5. Vision (being forward-looking)
6. Desire or passion to lead and inspire
7. Positive attitude and self-confidence; charisma
8. Knowledge of the business and/or group task at hand; competence
9. The ability to overcome adversity or obstacle

10. Being a Servant-Leader, serving people, and especially being humble
11. Having both religious faith and strong family ties
12. Framing or recognizing the worst adversity as an opportunity
13. Having a mentor or mentors in their development as leaders

Haller (2008, pp. 13-14)

Leadership Attributes or Traits, and Transformational Leadership Research

Starting back in the 1980s there was a resurgence of researchers updating the academic literature with their findings, repackaging, and comments leadership trait theory. Many of the leadership scholars focused there framing on leadership traits in the context of discussing transformational leadership.

Review of Recent Research on Individual Traits or Attributes

The findings, re-naming and framing of trait theory and transformational, or situational leadership research was led by scholars such as, Blanchard and Johnson (1982), Blanchard, Zigarmi, and Zigarmi (1985), Kouzes and Posner (2002), Peters and Waterman (1982), Peters and Austin (1985), and Peters (1987). Peters and his co-authors commented on trait theory by adding their concept of “ excellence” as the objective of leadership success. Much of the leadership theory research focused on the important effects of being a transformational leader.

A great number of the studies done on traits by researchers in the first half of the twentieth century used young children or high school/college students as their subjects (Bass & Stogdill, 1990, pp. 59-77). Much of the research done on leadership traits after 1950 focused on business managers, major company CEOs, and recent college graduates entering management training programs in large firms (pp. 78-88).

By the second half of the twentieth century, the theory that leaders were “born” had been rejected by several major researchers, including Bennis (1989, p. 5), Gardner (1990, p. xv), and Kotter (1990, pp. 103-107). Van Fleet and Yukl (1986) held that certain characteristics improved a leader’s chance of success and that those characteristics included initiative and fortitude.

Mann’s (1959) research on leadership documented the positive relationship between the personal traits of intelligence, adjustment, extroversion, dominance, masculinity, and sensitivity. The work by Jago (1982) asserted that there is a set of qualities or characteristics which can be attributed and measured in those who are perceived to successfully employ such characteristics (pp. 317-319).

Jago concluded that leaders’ behavior is determined by their attributes. Their characteristics, knowledge, and skills, which he called “qualities,” influenced their behavior. Jago focused specifically on how these qualities of a leader interact with the leader’s perception of group attributes, the particular task at hand, and the general context of the situation (pp. 315-336).

Kouzes and Posner’s (2002) extensive research identified respected and admired characteristics in leaders necessary to “make or build” a leader.
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Kouzes and Posner identified nineteen qualities or characteristics as being the most admired in leaders; which they claimed were consistent over time and across six continents (pp. 24-25). Their list started with “ honest,” which was selected by 88% of the respondents (pp. 24-28). Their other top three traits were: (a) forward-looking, (b) competent, and (c) inspiring, having been selected by between 58% and 73%. A fifth quality, “ intelligent,” received a 47% response rating from the survey participants (pp. 25-26). Kouzes and Posner administered their survey over a period of twenty years to over 75, 000 participants, including ten thousand managers and business executives and a limited number of government managers (p. 24). Haller (2008, pp. 13-15)

An integrated model of Exemplary followership is leadership:

With the help of traits of exemplary follower and universally accepted leadership traits a model for followership is leadership is developed here which can support the assumption exemplary followership is leadership in certain contexts of organizations. An exemplary follower can take the role of leader in a situation where he as an exemplary follower will act as a leader.

(E) See clearly how their job relates to the enterprise/ Knowledge of the business and/or group task at hand; competence (L)

(E) Realize they add value by being who they are, their experiences and ideals/. A high level of people skills (L)

(E) Structure their daily work and day-to-day activities/ competent (L)

(E) Realize they add value by being who they are, their experiences and
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(E) Take initiative on increasing their value to the

(E) See clearly how their job relates to the enterprise/

(E) Structure their daily work and day-to-day activities/ competent

(E) Take initiative on increasing their value to the organization/. Initiative, assertiveness, drive, or determination

(E) Put themselves on the critical path toward accomplishment/ Positive attitude and self-confidence; charisma (L)

(E) Do an exceptional job on critical path activities related to the goal/ Desire or passion to lead and inspire (L)

(E) Make sure the tasks they are to perform are on the critical path/ the ability to overcome adversity or obstacle (L)

(E) Focus on the goal/ Excellent communication skills or willingness to speak up, take position, or take charge (L)

E) Review their progress daily or weekly/ competent (L)

(E) Support the team and the leader/ Being a Servant-Leader, serving people, and especially being humble (L)

(E) Increase their scope of critical path activities/ Framing or recognizing the worst adversity as an opportunity (L)

(E)Go above and beyond the job/ Vision (being forward-looking) (L)

(E)Develop additional expertise/ having a mentor or mentors in their development as leaders (L)

(E) Champion new ideas/ forward-looking (L)

(E)Think for themselves/. Honesty or integrity (L)

Leader and exemplary follower traits

Leadership

Exemplary follower ship is leadership (E for exemplary followership traits, L for leadership traits)

Kelley's followership basis:

Followership, for example, sounds like the words of Jesus, who chose his disciples with the command, " Follow me" (NAS: Mat. 4: 19, 9: 9, 16: 24, 19: 21, Mar. 1: 17, 2: 14, 8: 34, 10: 21, Luk. 5: 27, 9: 23, 18: 22). In fact, in the four gospels, the word follow occurs 91 times. Actually, however, Kelley traces his inspiration to a moment of boredom in a hotel room (1992, p. 22) where his eyes came to rest on a bible, presumably provided by the Gideons. This caused him to reflect on religions in general-Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam and Christianity.

And he began to consider how Christ's followers-not Christ himself-changed the world. This is how Kelley's thinking on followership began.

Similarly, Greenleaf's concept of servant leadership could conceivably have been inspired by Christ. In Mark (10: 43-45), Jesus tells his disciples "

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whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." And in John (13: 14-15), Jesus says, " If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you. " Though Greenleaf does freely refer to various events and statements from the life of Christ, Greenleaf only once quotes one of Jesus' servant statements though the mouth of Mr. Billings, a character in *Teacher as Servant* (1979, p. 28)

This initial thinking of Kelly towards followership is supporting the notion that followership is leadership varying to different contexts of organizations.

Barack Obama: An exemplary Follower

Born to a Kenyan father and an American mother, Barack Obama has a multiracial heritage. He made history when he was elected as the 44th President of the United States of America, as he is the first African American to hold this post. Though, young and inexperienced as he has not spent much time in Washington, Barack Obama has worked for the last twenty years as a community organizer, a civil rights attorney, a constitutional law professor, a State Senator and then U. S. Senator.

He was hired as Community organizer by Developing Communities Project, a church based community organization. The organization wanted a young black man to help them collaborate with black churches in the south side.

From 1985 to 1988, Obama worked there as Director of the organization. He helped blacks fight for their rights from the city government. He worked to <https://assignbuster.com/neglected-side-of-leadership-phenomenon-the-followers-management-essay/>

improve the living conditions of poor neighborhoods which faced crimes unemployment. Working in a small organization taught him organizational skills. He was always good with words and was known for making speeches which people could emotionally connect to. He worked with Saul Alinsky whose method was “ agitation” which meant getting people angry enough about their current state of things that they are compelled to take some step and do something. During his tenure at Developing Communities Project, the staff at this organization grew from 1 to 13 and so did their budget. Then, he worked as consultant and instructor for Gamaliel Foundation, a community organizing institute.

Barack Obama felt that law was a medium which could facilitate activism and community organization. So in late 1988, he entered Harvard Law School. In his second year at college, in 1990, he was elected as the president of law review. This role required him to be editor- in-chief and supervisor of law review staff of about 80 editors. As he was the first black to be elected for this position, it was a widely reported and much publicized event. It had taken Obama long sessions of discussion with conservatives to support him. While still in law school in 1989, he worked as an associate at Sidley and Austin law firms. He met his future wife Michelle, also a lawyer, here. Newton Minnow was a managing partner here. Minnow, later introduced him to many of the Chicago’s top leaders. In the summer of 1990, he worked at Hopkins and Sutter and finally graduated from Harvard in 1991; after which he again moved back to Chicago where he practiced as a civil rights lawyer. His could have easily taken up a good job after Harvard but his values and mother’s teachings had taught him to do something for the

society and the less privileged ones. The publicity that he garnered at Harvard, because of his election as first black president of Harvard law review, led him to an offer by University of Chicago law school to write book on racial relations. Meanwhile, Barack Obama also taught Constitutional Law at University of Chicago Law School from 1992- 2004; first as a Lecturer from 1992 to 1996 and then as Senior Lecturer from 1996 to 2004. Barack had also joined Davis, Miner, Barnhill and Galland law firm as civil rights attorney. He was an Associate in this law firm from 1993 to 1996 and then counsel from 1996 to 2004. Barack served on the board of Directors Woods Fund of Chicago, Joyce foundation form 1994 to 2002. In 1992, he became the founding member of board of director of Public Allies but resigned in 1993 and his wife joined it. All these years in Chicago, he served on board of directors of Chicago Annenberg Challenge, Chicago lawyers Committee for Civil Right under Law, the Centre for Neighborhood Technology and Lugenia Burns Hope Center.

In 1992 election he had organized largest voter registration drives, Project Vote, in history of Chicago from April to October 1992. He had with him a staff of ten and around seven hundred volunteers. They had the goal of registering around 150, 000 African Americans in the state who were unregistered. It was one of the most successful voter registration drives one had ever seen. Barack's work led him to run for Illinois State Senate. Eventually, he was elected in 1996 November, succeeding State Senator Alice Palmer, as Barack Obama was the only candidate left, after rest of the petitions were invalidated..

He went on to serve three terms in the Illinois State Senate, from the year 1997 to 2004. Barack lost a primary run for U. S. House of Representatives to Bobby Rush in a very close fight in the year 2000. In the year 2003, he passed legislation to expand healthcare coverage to 70, 000 children making Kid care, state Children's Health insurance program, permanent. The legislation also extended health insurance to uninsured parents, which added up to additional 84, 000 parents. After he found there were 13 innocent death row inmates, Barack saw to it that death penalty reforms were changed. Also, Illinois became the first state where videotaping an interrogation became mandatory. Even Law enforcement agreed that recording questioning would help the prosecution's chances. As the Chairman of Illinois Senate's Health and Human Services Committee, Barack Obama unanimously led a legislation to be passed on racial profiling by the police, which means maintaining records of the race, age and gender of the drivers detained. For low income families, Obama created Illinois Earned Income tax credit which offered tax relief.

Barack Obama came into national limelight with an inspiring speech at July 2004 Democratic National Convention where he spoke against the Bush administration's policies on Iraq war. His speech was the highlight of the convent