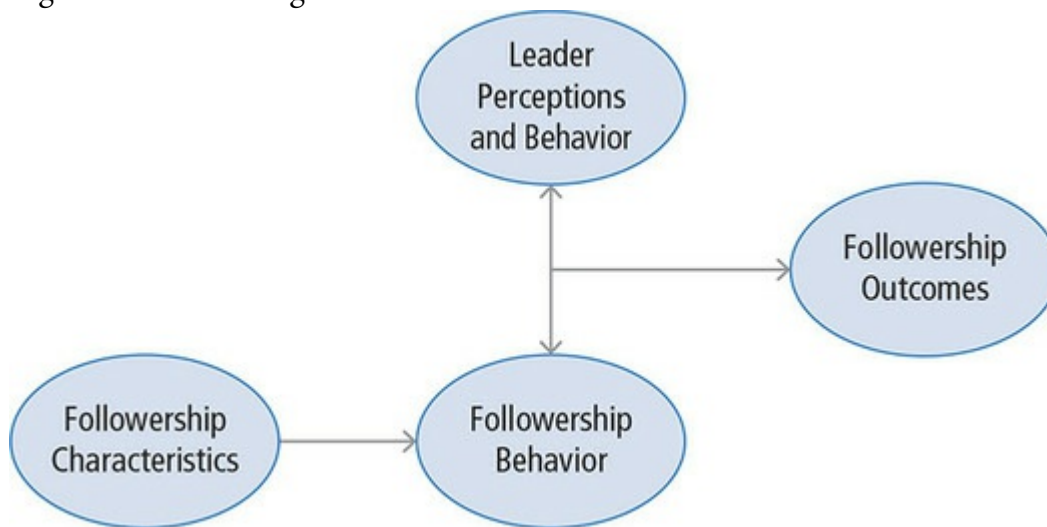


Reversing the Lens

Reversing the lens is an approach to followership that addresses followers in a manner opposite of the way they have been studied in most prior leadership research. Rather than focusing on how *followers are affected by* leaders, it focuses on how *followers affect* leaders and organizational outcomes. Reversing the lens emphasizes that followers can be change agents. As illustrated in [Figure 12.6](#), this approach addresses (1) the impact of followers' characteristics on followers' behaviors, (2) the impact of followers' behaviors on leaders' perceptions and behavior and the impact of the leaders' perceptions and behavior on followers' behaviors, and (3) the impact of both followers and leaders on followership outcomes.

Figure 12.6 Reversing the Lens



Source: From “Followership Theory: A Review and Research Agenda,” by M. Uhl-Bien, R. R. Riggio, R. B. Lowe, and M. K. Carsten, *The Leadership Quarterly*, 25, p. 98. Copyright 2014 by Elsevier. Reprinted with permission.

A hypothetical example of how the *reversing the lens* framework might work is the research a team is doing on employees and followership in a small, nonprofit organization. In this situation, researchers might be interested in how followers' personality traits (e.g., introversion–extraversion, dogmatism) relate to how they act at work—that is, their style and work behavior. Researchers might also examine how employees' behavior affects their supervisor's leadership behavior or how the follower–leader relationship affects organizational outcomes. These are just a sample of the research questions that could be addressed. However, notice that the overriding purpose and theme of the study is the *impact of followers on the followership process*.