

2001

Followership: Why Leadership Works

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Followership: Why Leadership Works

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the requirement for the degree of
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Abstract

Followership: Why Leadership Works

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Thesis

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Using the theory of followership developed by Robert Kelley, this case study will examine the role of the follower, the various types of followers present in organizations and their importance to the study of leadership. It will examine an alternative theory by Ira Chaleff and discuss current literature on the follower-leader relationship. This case study will then examine the followership skills of Agnes Anderson (name changed), through analysis of her followership self-assessment and the followership assessments completed by leaders she has worked with in both professional and volunteer situations and conclude with general observations on the topic.

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Statement of Problem

The purpose of this case study is to examine followership theory as it relates to Agnes Anderson. This case study will examine followership theory, its relationship to other followership and leadership theories and to the professional and volunteer work of Agnes Anderson. It will compare and contrast the professional and volunteer work of Agnes, examining her broad range of experiences and how closely she relates to Robert Kelley's definition of the exemplary follower.

Research Methodology

Research was conducted through the use of a self-assessment that was completed by Agnes Anderson and through personal, semi-structured interviews on the results of the self-assessment. Additional research data was collected by a selected group of leaders that worked directly with Agnes in both professional and volunteer situations. This additional data consisted of a formal assessment and personal, semi-structured interviews on the results of the assessment. Each participant's anonymity was assured and no presentation outside of the class presentation and paper presentation was agreed upon without their additional consent. What is presented here is believed to be an honest and accurate representation of the facts, feelings and perceptions of the individuals involved in the case study.

Introduction

Some people are just 'born leaders' and it seems to make sense, at least to this writer, that some people are just 'born followers.' The role of the follower has been under-emphasized in modern leadership study. Everyone wants to be a leader and organizations seem to want to make leaders of everyone. What about those individuals who have a deeper sense of themselves and have made the conscious choice not to lead, but rather to follow?

This case study offers an opportunity to examine one such follower theory. Through this case study, I will first introduce the reader to the work of Robert Kelley, an author, teacher and consultant in the area of followership. Secondly, I will offer an alternative followership model as developed by Ira Chaleff. Then I will connect the theories of Kelley and Chaleff and others and offer connections to the importance of followership in leadership studies. The reader will then be introduced to Agnes Anderson, the subject of the case study. The case study will examine the followership style of Agnes using Kelley's theory and support it through the observations of supervisors and leaders who have worked with Agnes. The conclusion will provide some of the personal insights I have gained as a result of this case study.

The Work of Robert Kelley

Robert Kelley published his book titled The Power of Followership: How to Create Leaders People Want to Follow, and Followers Who Lead Themselves in 1992. Kelley (1992) states, "This book is about what it feels like to be a follower and

how to become a better one. Followers are not all the same. Some merely join, adding their names to the membership list and doing nothing more. Others collaborate with leaders to further some goal in which they believe—a social cause, a creative idea, a new product, a special service, a worthy person.” (1)

This research is based on surveys of over seven hundred (700) people, whose views on followership and leadership were solicited. This group of people averaged thirty-seven (37) years of age, had thirteen (13) years of work experience and indicated they had nine (9) different managers while working for three (3) different companies. The group represented over twenty (20) different industries. He also interviewed a selection of these individuals to gain deeper insight into their views.

Kelley has also presented to many professional associations, including the Institute of Management Studies, and the American Society of Training and Development. He has conducted workshops for many institutions including Bell Laboratories, Hewlett-Packard, IBM, AT&T, Pillsbury and GTE. These presentations to over 1000 participants provided additional input and feedback for the followership concepts identified in his book. He has also taught a course in followership in the Industrial Management Program at the Graduate School of Industrial Administration of Carnegie-Mellon University. His students researched and tested his followership theory on both academic and personal levels.

Kelley has over eighteen (18) years of hands-on consulting experience and has had the opportunity to personally interview and observe leaders and followers at many major corporations, government agencies and not-for-profit organizations.

Bell Labs alone provided Kelley with access to over six hundred (600) professionals and managers who studied and applied his concepts of followership on the job.

Followership Paths

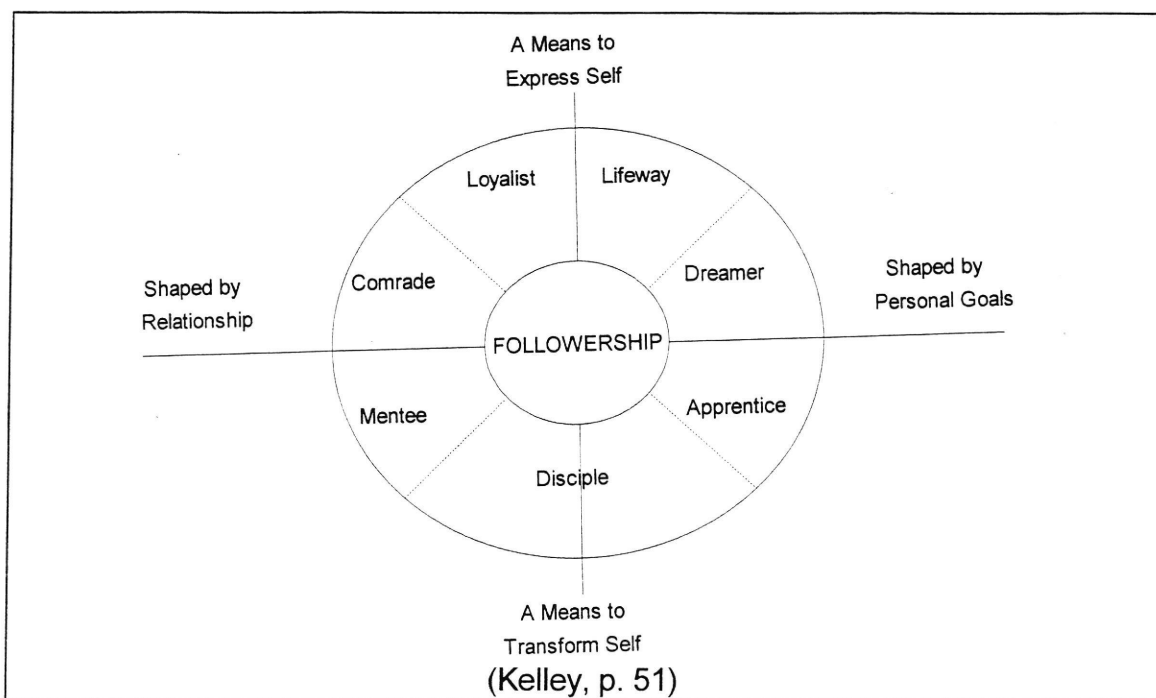
Kelley's research has led him to identify seven paths to followership. These seven paths are characterized by different sets of motivations. Although Kelley acknowledges that other followership paths may exist, he has identified that they are far less common or are simply an offshoot of one of the seven he identifies. The seven paths that Kelley discusses are positioned on a matrix, which uses the means of self-expression and self-transformation as the vertical axis and shaping of relationships and personal goals as the horizontal axis. (See figure 1) Self-expression paths are used by individuals who are generally comfortable with their talents, lifestyle and personal accomplishments. Self-transformation paths, however, are used by those individuals who seek personal growth in order to become a different and better person. At the same time, some followers are drawn to the interpersonal involvement, relationships, of followership and follow people more than goals and dreams. Others have an intrapersonal focus, personal goals, where the focus is not on relationships with others, but rather a means for achieving personal dreams (p. 52).

Apprentice:

Kelley describes the apprentice as "the most easily identified followership path" (p. 53). It is the one chosen by those who aspire to be leaders. They are able to identify the need to learn from other leaders and that they will need to "pay their

dues". The hope that by being a good follower, they will gain the confidence of their leaders and peers. They study leadership from the follower's perspective.

Figure 1
Seven Paths to Followership



Disciple:

Often thought of only in the religious realm, discipleship can have a negative image as blind obedience to a great leader. Kelley prefers the original meaning, "one who is learning from a teacher". (p. 57) Discipleship involves the movement of knowledge and experience from a leader to a group of followers. Disciples are important to organizations and leaders because they can carry the message of the organization or leader to others, acting much like missionaries.

Mentee:

Mentorship involves a one-on-one relationship between the follower and leader. Like apprentices, mentees chose to be followers in order to transform themselves. Rather than focusing on specific skills, a mentees goal is personal maturity. Mentees need good mentors, who have the skills and desire to give of themselves for the benefit of the growth of the mentee. Mentees are valuable future leaders for organizations.

Comrade:

Comradeship, as Kelley defines it, "is found in any endeavor that requires the effort and talents of more than one person". (p. 66) This type of followership may have more to do with social aspects than of personal growth or experience.

Comradeship is a bonding together of people. Comrades make excellent team members because of their desire to belong.

Loyalist:

"Some people follow out of personal loyalty to the leader." (Kelley, p. 71) This sense of loyalty for some people is an "obligation of existence." (p.71) The relationship between the follower and the leader is the key. It results from an emotional commitment, often the choice of the follower to follow the leader. It is a one-to-one relationship based on commitment. Loyalists will go to extraordinary lengths to support the leader and are assets to the organization.

Lifeway:

This followership path involves not only a professional choice, but also a way of life. "It is taken by people who follow out of the conviction that no other lifeway is as rewarding. These people follow out of personal preference." (Kelley, p. 78) The

primary goal of this path is service to others. This path most closely resembles aspects of servant leadership as defined by Robert Greenleaf. Greenleaf (1977) states in his book, Servant Leadership, "It begins with the natural feeling...deep down inside...that one wants to serve, to serve first." (p. 13) These individuals are followers because they have made the choice that following is what they really want to do.

Dreamer:

Committed to a personal dream rather than to the leader, dreamers are so focused on achieving their dream that it does not matter what role they take—either follower or leader. Dreamers may follow a particular leader because that leader represents the idea or cause the dreamer is connected to. Dreamers are most interested in the message, leadership is secondary. To be effective in organizations, the goals of the dreamer and the organization must be clear and intertwined.

This model and the descriptions of the various paths an individual may take to followership represent some of the career choices that a person drawn to followership may take. (Kelley, p. 77) Although all paths can lead to followership, Kelley is clear that only one path represents both a career choice and a way of life. To be an exemplary follower, Kelley will argue, requires this dual path.

Followership Styles

Kelley's seminars on followership presented him with many insights from both leaders and followers. Kelley observed that followers lacked a formal model of

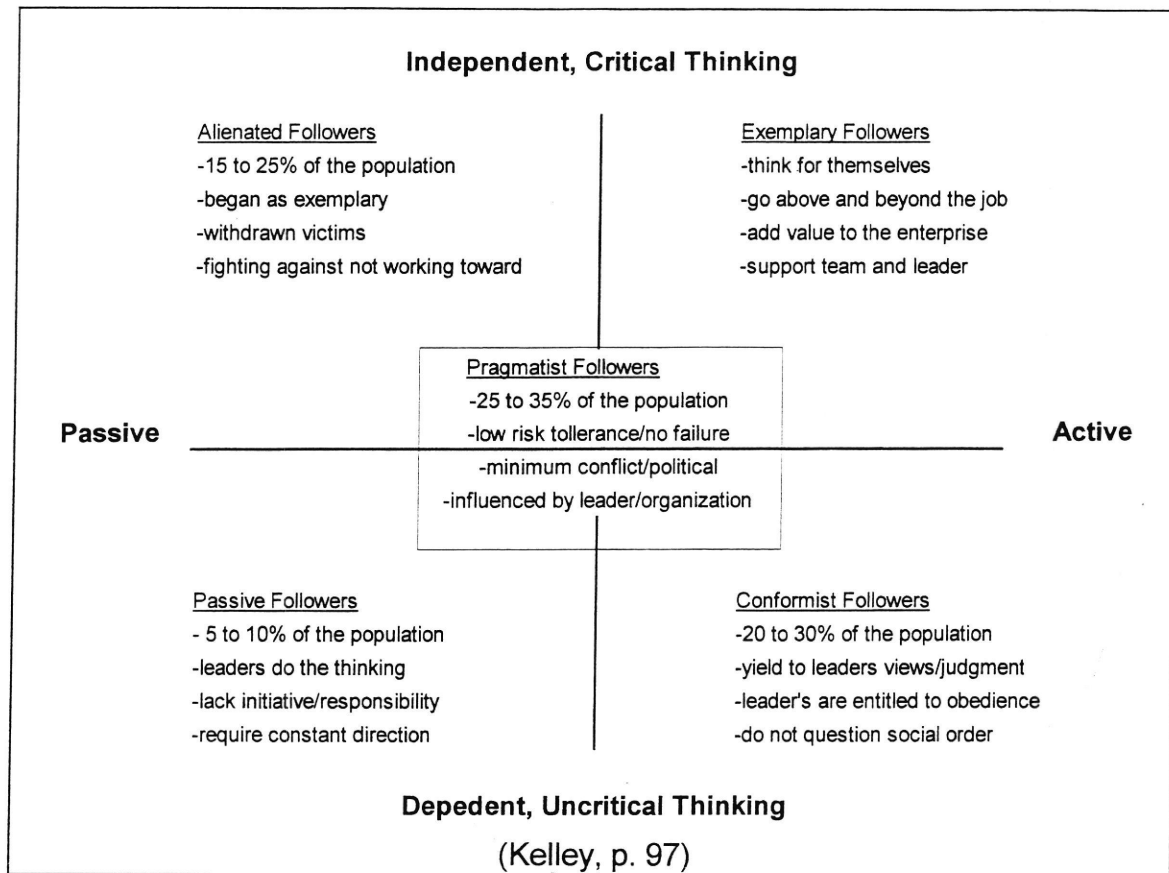
followership that offered explanation of their particular followership style. Many models of leadership style existed, but followers were left with only the historical perspective of the passive, blindly obedient follower.

“Since most of us spend the majority of our time in the followership role, it stands to reason that how we perform as followers determines, for the most part, how satisfied we are with our day-to-day work existence.” (Kelley, p. 88) This observation is what prompted Kelley to develop a model of followership styles. As a part of his model, he developed a questionnaire with two purposes in mind. First, to help people determine the kind of follower they are. Second, to help identify one’s strengths as a follower and to assist in identifying those followership skills that need further development. “It provides a road map for becoming a better apprentice, disciple, mentee, colleague, team member.” (Kelley p. 89) This questionnaire will be discussed further in the case study, as it was used as a data-gathering tool.

Followership Styles Model

Kelley’s followership styles model is also structured around two axes. The horizontal axis measures the degree of involvement ranging from active to passive. The vertical axis measures the degree of critical thought from dependent to independent. From this matrix, Kelley identifies five followership styles. See figure 2 below.

Figure 2
Followership Styles



The Alienated Follower:

Alienated followers are independent and critical thinkers, but are passive in carrying out the role. Many alienated followers began as exemplary followers, but something, someone or somehow became turned off and as a result withdrew. Kelley describes them as “capable but cynical, alienated followers sarcastically criticize the leader’s efforts, frequently hold back their own effort, or sink gradually into disgruntled acquiescence.” (p. 100) His popular example is the television character of Hawkeye Pierce in the series M*A*S*H. These followers are hurt and are looking for an opportunity to punish someone for the things that have injured them. Their activity is channeled into fighting against rather than working with. Unfortunately, this fighting activity rarely accomplishes the task; rather they create

an environment that brings retaliation from both the leader and the organization. For many alienated followers, their experience with an organization often ends with involuntary termination.

This does not, however, have to be the fate of the alienated follower. Because they already have independent and critical thinking skills and many have already experienced exemplary followership, the key to moving into the exemplary style is attitude. To leave the alienated feelings behind, the individual must overcome their negativity and become actively engaged again. (Kelley, p. 105)

The Conformist Follower:

The exact opposite of the alienated follower, the conformist is actively engaged but exercises dependent and uncritical thinking. Kelley describes conformists as eager to accept orders and to willingly defer to a leader's authority. They yield to the leader's views and judgments. For the conformist, the leader has the power and that power entitles the leader to the obedience of the follower. Conformists prefer structure and need someone to be in charge. Kelley uses Oliver North as an example of a conformist who did not question authority.

Kelley acknowledges the societal role in creating conformist followers. "Most societies encourage conformity. Submission to authority is reinforced at home, in schools, at church, on sports teams, in the military, and at work. The rationale is that the price of victory--whether in life, war or merely a basketball game--is deference to authority. To succeed, followers must just do what they are told." (p. 109)

Conformists also have the opportunity to experience exemplary followership. Because conformists are already actively engaged, they need to work on their independent and critical thinking. Leaders already recognize them as an important and committed contributor. Kelley suggests that conformists develop this skill by learning to play the 'devils advocate' and to ask the difficult questions. Then conformists need to develop their own ideas and to confront their fear of conflict and lack of structure.

The Pragmatist Follower:

This group is placed in the center of Kelley's model. A difficult group to manage, they walk the fence, taking on the characteristics of the other four styles during different situations. The key characteristics of the pragmatist are their willingness to question the decisions of the leader, but not often or too critically. They do their job, but seldom much beyond it. Pragmatists are aware of organizational politics and are sensitive to shifts in power. Concerned about their position in the organization when leadership changes, Kelley describes them as "gamespeople who manipulate others and the organization to their benefit". (p. 117)

Pragmatists also can become exemplary followers. They need to move beyond pure survival and identify with a larger goal. This larger goal brings with it excitement and enthusiasm for their work. Kelley uses Ray Kroc, known for his role as CEO of McDonald's, as an example of a man who spent most of his life working a variety of jobs and not until in his 50's found his passion working for the McDonald brothers. When pragmatists find their purpose, they then need to build trust and credibility in their organization.

The Passive Follower:

The least effective of the follower styles, the passive follower is the exact opposite of the exemplary style. Both passive and dependent, the passive follower lacks initiative and responsibility. In a work edited by Larry Spears (1998), Kelley describes them as “sheep followers.” (p. 175) At the extreme, they want the leader to do all their thinking for them and require constant direction when given a task to perform. They will never venture beyond the task given to them.

Kelley is quick to dispel the notion that passive followership is related to the personality of the individual. “My research and experience show that many passive followers are simply people who haven’t developed their followership skills. So they basically do nothing.” (Kelley, p. 123) Others, however, simply do not wish to be followers at all, and therefore, they shut down and give as little effort or thought as possible.

Passive followers must learn the broad range of followership skills in order to achieve exemplary followership status. They must understand that following is not the mindless, effortless, passive activity that they believe it is. They must be encouraged to invest the time and energy into developing themselves as followers.

These four styles of followership account for the majority of people in organizations. The crux of Kelley’s work, however, focuses on the fifth style, that of the exemplary follower. Kelley identifies this as the followership goal. The next section will look at the exemplary style in detail and will set the foundation for the case study application.

The Exemplary Follower

The difference between the exemplary follower and all other followers is that they fall in the active and independent, critical thinking section of Kelley's matrix. They are capable of and exercise independent and critical thinking apart from the leader or the group. They are described as independent thinkers and are recognized as being their own person. At the same time they are actively engaged, using their skills and abilities for the benefit of the organization regardless of the work of others in their work team. Kelley states clearly that, "Exemplary followers who use both these skills become enormously valuable to leaders and their organizations." (p. 126) Kelley further describes this style:

Workers in this category never stop thinking for themselves. They do not follow blindly; but when they disagree with the leader, they do so constructively with the organization's best interest at heart. Plus, they carry out their assignments with great energy, paying attention to the policy implications down the road as well as the details of implementation. Exemplary followers are self-starters and creative problem solvers, applying their talents for the benefit of the organization even when confronted with bureaucratic inanities or nonproducing colleagues. And because they have these qualities they get consistently high ratings from peers as well as supervisors. (Spears, p. 176)

Exemplary followers possess skills in three broad categories. Kelley identifies these as follows:

- Job Skills--how exemplary followers add value with their:
 - Focus and commitment
 - Competence in critical path activities
 - Initiative in increasing their value to the organization
- Organizational Skills--how exemplary followers nurture and leverage a web of organizational relationships with:
 - Team members
 - Organizational networks
 - Leaders

- Values Component—how exemplary followers exercise a courageous conscience, which guides their job activities and organizational relationships.

(p. 129)

Exemplary followers add value through their jobs. This value is what they bring to the organization and leader as evidence of how they will help the organization meet its goals. This is more than just doing a good job. It involves making a personal commitment to the organization's goals and looking for all opportunities to move the organization toward its goals faster. They do this through their focus and commitment. For this to occur, the organization must have clear goals and vision.

Kelley makes reference to the work for Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi. Csikszentmihalyi (1994) studied the optimal experience, which he described as Flow. Flow is defined as "the state in which people are so involved in an activity that nothing else seems to matter; the experience itself is so enjoyable that people will do it even at great cost, for the sheer sake of doing it." (Csikszentmihalyi, p. 4) This is important to Kelley's work because it offers some insight into the experience that the exemplary follower may have when allowed to perform their tasks fully. Through Csikszentmihalyi's work, we can understand that the optimal experience can provide a great deal of satisfaction to the follower, which may alleviate the need to look for it elsewhere.

Adding value by doing a great job is not enough for the exemplary follower. They recognize the need to go beyond themselves and to work on relationships with their co-workers and leaders. These relationships further work to benefit the

organization, and the exemplary follower understands that. Rather than focusing on their own self-interest, exemplary followership also involves keeping other people and their interests in mind. Exemplary followers weave a web of these types of social relationships. Kelley recognizes the importance of these relationships in conjunction with workplace changes. "As many bosses now have twenty to thirty people reporting to them rather than the traditional five to seven, followers can count on leaders less for direction or input. Followers must rely on each other more." (Kelley, p. 150) Exemplary followers are good team players. But they join teams with a critical eye to the very existence of the team. They need to understand that the team is really needed and that the goals of the team are clear.

But being a part of the team is not enough. Teams still work in a larger organizational setting, and the exemplary follower also places high importance on building a broad network that crosses traditional departmental lines. They realize that the achievement of goals is an organizational objective. They are able to identify key people throughout the entire organization who can both help or hinder the achievement of goals.

The final and most complex relationship that the exemplary follower must deal with is that of their leader. Exemplary followers work in cooperation with their leader, keeping their own ego in check to keep it from interfering with the leader's projects or other follower's ability to reach their goals. But they are also not afraid of expressing disagreement on the important issues. The leader is not followed blindly, but rather cooperatively. They are willing to risk the leader-follower relationship in order to assert their view. Because of their web of relationships, they

are aware of how the leader's decisions can affect the team's ability to reach its goal.

The skills of the exemplary follower are many. The exemplary follower does not manage this set of skills but rather lives them out as an integrated component of their very being. Although a solid partnership between leader and follower make these skills easier to utilize, it is clear that the exemplary follower sees no alternative to be less than they are. Kelley summarizes this discussion well. "Exemplary followership is not the exclusive domain of superheroes and demigods. Exemplary followers are ordinary people, not some idealized stereotype to be cloned." (p. 166)

An Additional Model

Ira Chaleff (1995) offers us another model that supports and expands upon Kelley's. This model is described as the courageous follower. Chaleff is a founding partner and president of the Institute for Business Technology, U.S. His clients include a broad range of Fortune 500 companies and government agencies. He has served as a special assistant for organizational development to over a dozen U.S. Senators and Representatives, and as the executive director of the Congressional Management Foundation. Chaleff offers the following insight into his interest in the followership subject. "If you scroll through the subject catalogue at the Library of Congress you will find the category "leadership" and hundreds of books on the subject. You will not find a category "followership" and you will only find a handful of articles and a book or two on the subject, tucked away under the

leadership rubric. This is curious as there are many more followers in the world than leaders.” (p. xii)

The core to Chaleff's work is the understanding that the purpose is central to the follower-leader relationship. Both followers and leaders are responsible for working toward and achieving the purpose. For followers, it is important to understand personal power and how to use it. Then, it is important to appreciate the value of leadership and acknowledge the contributions that leaders make. “If we are to attain the empowerment we crave, we must accept responsibility for both our own roles and the roles of our leaders. Only by accepting this dual responsibility do we ultimately accept responsibility for our organizations and the people they serve.” (Chaleff, p. 3)

The Five Dimensions of Courageous Followership

The model that Chaleff has created involves five dimensions. The first is the courage to assume responsibility. Chaleff believes that courageous followers assume responsibility for themselves and the organization, rather than placing that responsibility on the leader directly. They create their own opportunities that fulfill their potential and maximize their value to the organization.

A courageous follower also has the courage to serve. These individuals are not afraid of working hard in service to a leader. They are willing to take on additional and new responsibilities. They look for how their strengths complement the leader. When the leader makes tough decisions, the courageous follower

supports the leader. Working toward the common purpose is as important for the follower as the leader.

Courageous followers have a voice and know how to use it. They are willing to challenge behaviors or decisions of the leader or group when they feel that what is right is in question. This characteristic is identified as the courage to challenge. Although the courageous follower values harmony, they will not permit decisions to be made that place the purpose in jeopardy.

When behaviors that challenge the purpose do not change, the courageous leader recognizes the need for change. They have the courage to participate in transformation. They are willing to ask for change and will remain faithful to the leader and organization while the struggle for change occurs. They are willing to examine their own behavior and participate in the change process as well.

Finally, the courageous follower has the courage to leave. When they have grown beyond the organization or leader, or when change does not occur and the purpose remains in jeopardy, the courageous follower knows when to leave. They are also willing to accept a high level of personal risk in order to challenge an ineffective or destructive leader.

The model of the courageous follower is highly compatible with the exemplary follower theory. In the next section of the case study, I will compare these two models and offer insight into how followership relates to the leadership study field.

Limitations of the Theories

The followership theories presented are not without their limitations. The two primary limitations that are apparent are that of gender and culture. Chaleff makes a limited mention of gender, referring to the upbringing of boys that may inhibit their ability to model empathy. Chaleff suggests that boys are trained to hold in their feelings. This creates an “anesthetized condition”. (Chaleff, p137) However, neither Kelley nor Chaleff offer much further insight into the feminine or masculine characteristics that encourage or inhibit followership.

The other component missing in both of these theories is that of culture. Both address organizational culture, but very little is discussed on ethnic or spiritual culture. The multicultural makeup of modern organizations must consider these important characteristics. How culture affects the ability to challenge authority figures is a critical discussion in followership theory. Both theories represent the American tradition rather than global awareness.

Followership in Leadership Studies

Ira Chaleff's observation regarding the limited amount of literature on followership is true. It seems ironic that leadership should be so highly valued and studied, when followership is the skill that most leaders rely upon for their success. However a review of the leadership literature does offer us a few glimpses of this follower-leader dynamic. The very presence of the term follower in books on leadership seems to indicate a shift in the attitude and understanding of the importance of the follower-leader relationship.

Robert Terry (1993), the author of Authentic Leadership Courage in Action makes specific mention of Kelley's followership work. He states, "In Kelley's view, and mine, followership is not the opposite of leadership." (p. 216) He also states, "None of the typical comments is very flattering to followers. Yet followership may be as critical to our understanding of leadership as leadership itself." (p. 213)

Terry also refers to the follower-leader relationship in his discussion of ethical leadership. Citing the works of Max DePree, Robert Tucker and James McGregor Burns, to name a few of the many leadership scholars that Terry has studied, Terry challenges the leader toward the ethical use of power and the importance of ethical behavior in the follower-leader relationship. Burns (1978) makes the following observation in his work Leadership. Leadership is exercised, "when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological, and other resources, so as to arouse, engage, and satisfy the motives of followers. This is done in order to realize goals mutually held by both leaders and followers." (p. 18)

Kelley is careful about the role of the leader to empower the follower. Transformational leadership raises concerns for Kelley. "These statistics constitute a strong indictment by followers against the quality of leadership, and gives the lie to two current management gods: the god of 'empowerment' and the god of 'transformational' leadership, which supposedly remakes followers from a mindless mass into capable individuals. Followers are insulted by the suggestion that they need empowering or transformation." (Kelly, p. 201) Although there are many leaders who may desire the transformation of followers, I believe that both Terry and

Burns, and most likely others, are not suggesting that this transformation is intended to manipulate the follower, but rather to encourage them to a higher level of commitment. There appears to be a need for some balance in the debate, with the focus being on authentic and ethical leadership.

An interesting perspective on the follower-leader dynamic is offered by William Yeomans (1996). His book, written in response to the rapid changes in the workplace, offers a chapter devoted to followership skills. He challenges followers to remember that, “bosses are just subordinates who got pulled out of the pack and were given a chance to manage, often with no guidance.” (p. 173) Both exemplary and courageous followers are under constant pressure to become leaders. Organizations are quick to promote these types of followers because of their reputation and recognition by leaders. In addition, traditional follower-leader roles are changing and the relationship has flattened in many organizations. The introduction of teams, the downsizing of the number of managers and the introduction of a culturally mixed workforce have all contributed to this change.

One of the components of the followership theory used in this case study is the topic of confidence. The follower must have confidence in the leader; the leaders desire to achieve the goal or purpose, and the relationship between the follower and the leader. “The relationship between leaders and followers is not simply a rational one in which followers estimate the ability of the leader and decide to trust and follow. The relationship involves unconscious processes through which followers identify with leaders and thus participate in the leader’s mystique and power. The leader’s confidence is one of the signals that followers read in the

process of constructing an image of the leader as trustworthy.” (Banks & Powell, p. 54) In addition, the co-dependent relationship is also noted. Gooden continues by discussing the times when the leader must rely on their followers to compensate for their own difficulties. “Leaders who surround themselves with good workers can be encouraged and uplifted by the confidence of their teams.” (Banks & Powell, p55) This is most definitely an outcome of a leader encouraging the type of follower who is capable of performing this task--specifically the exemplary follower style.

Joseph Rost (1991) also makes reference to Kelley's work. Rost recognizes that the people involved in the work relationship are both follower and leader. “Thus, followers are part of the leadership relationship in a new paradigm of leadership. What is different about the emerging view of followers is the substantive meaning attached to the word and the clarity given to that understanding.” (Rost, p. 108) Rost continues by identifying five points that give the concept of follower clarity. He identifies that followers are active in the leadership process. This relates to Kelley's requirement of active engagement. Second, that the active nature falls on a continuum, from highly active to minimally active. Thirdly, that followers can be leaders and leaders can be followers. That this nature of the follower-leader relationship gives followers considerable influence. He further states, as point four, that followers may be followers in one organization and leaders in another. That followers are not always followers in every follower-leader relationship. Finally, Rost states, “followers do no do followership, they do leadership.” (p. 109) This may conflict with the more purist definition that Kelley prefers, but I believe that Rost is

referring to the interdependence of the follower-leader relationship and is empowering followers by referring to this relationship as leadership.

One additional area needs consideration. That of power. From an organizational hierarchy position, followers appear powerless. Yet Kelley, Chaleff and others have shown that followers possess much power in organizations, sometimes more than the leader they follow. Janet Hagberg's work in defining what real personal power is helps in this discussion.

In her discussion of leadership and power, Hagberg (1994) makes the following statement. "Leadership is always tied closely with the idea of followership, and people can motivate and guide followers at any stage of power, but true leadership is a term reserved for those who have experienced the crisis on integrity." (p. 149) What Hagberg refers to in this statement is that only after a leader comes to an understanding that leadership is not about power over others, but rather the ethical use of power to support and transform others, can they be truly effective. This same condition seems to be necessary for the exemplary follower. When the follower becomes actively engaged and develops independent and critical thinking, they come to understand that their work must be focused on the goal and that they need to support that goal independently from their own need for power. For the exemplary follower, it seems clear that their power comes from the service they provide to their leader and organization.

Certainly followership and leadership are interconnected. It is hard to imagine a leader not aware of the role of their followers and conversely, a follower not aware of the role of their leader. Kouzes and Posner (1993) include this

dynamic in their leadership definition, stated that leadership is, “a reciprocal relationship between those who choose to lead and those who decide to follow.” (p. 6)

The Research Subject

The individual selected for this study was selected because I felt that she portrayed the characteristics of a follower. This section of the case study presents a brief biographical sketch of this individual.

Agnes Anderson was born in 1918 in a small community 120 miles west of Minneapolis near Granite Falls, Minnesota. She is a graduate of the Minnesota School of Business. At age 26, while working in a federal Soil Conservation Service office, she was approached by her supervisor regarding the possibility of working at the State Capitol in Saint Paul. Agnes volunteered and was assigned to the steno pool. After her first week, she approached her supervisor and indicated that she would be quitting because she did not enjoy the work. Because of the war and the limited number of available young men to work, she was offered the opportunity to be a messenger. She accepted and entered the Minnesota history books as the first woman page to be hired at the State Capitol. “It was a big deal,” recalls Edward Burdick, now chief clerk of the House who was then in charge of pages. “Women were beginning to get elected to the Legislature and getting public jobs.” (Dawson)

Agnes would work in the state capitol for nearly 46 years, before retiring at the age of 71. She worked initially only during the legislative sessions, but eventually worked full-time. She retired from the front desk of the House of

Representatives as a clerk in 1989. She then began her work as a volunteer for her church, senior community center, the hospital and many other community and membership organizations. Agnes is currently 83 years old and is still an active volunteer.

Case Analysis

Agnes was asked to complete the self-assessment that Kelley provides. The respondent rates on a scale of zero to six, with zero indicating rarely and six indicating almost always. The numeric responses to these twenty questions then provide for a score on two scales. The first scale measures independent critical thinking, the second measures active engagement. These scores are then plotted on a matrix that indicates the type of follower that she most closely resembles based on Kelley's research. Agnes rated all questions at a five or six, indicating that each statement reflected her almost always. Her scores were 54 for independent thinking and 57 for active engagement. Plotted on the followership matrix, her scores place her solidly in the exemplary follower category. See figure 3. We must keep in mind, that this figure represents a self-assessment. A copy of the assessment is found as Appendix A.

Next, three individuals that work closely with Agnes were asked to complete the same assessment, only asking them to consider how they would rate Agnes. They used the same basic questions, scored in the same manner. A copy of this assessment is found as Appendix B. The following chart reflects the numeric responses of Agnes in the first column and the other three respondents in the

second, third and fourth column. The letter indicated after each question refers to whether the question was designed to measure (A) active engagement, or (I) independent, critical thinking. Each is plotted on the matrix, see figure 3. The individual questions are not listed, but can be found on the copies of the assessments in the appendices.

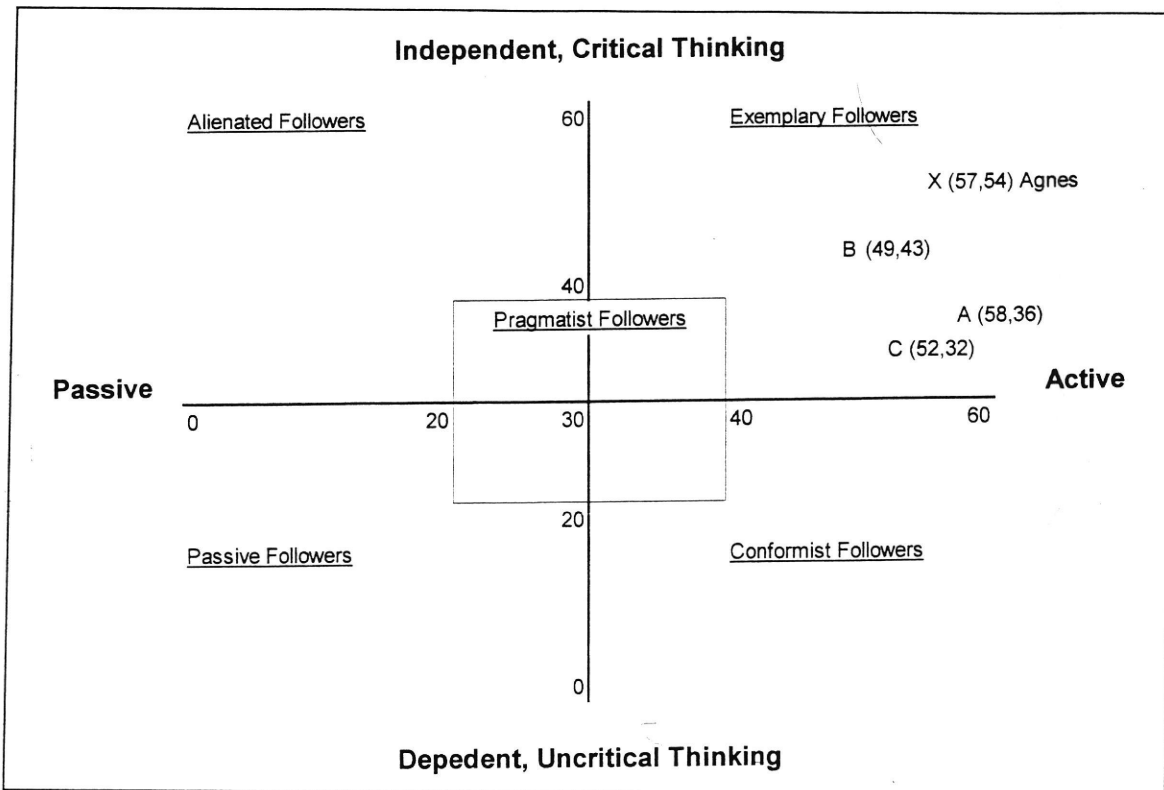
Followership Assessment					
<u>Question</u>	<u>Agnes</u>	<u>Leader A</u>	<u>Leader B</u>	<u>Leader C</u>	<u>Leader's Average</u>
1-I	6	5	5	5	5.0
2-A	6	5	4	5	4.6
3-A	6	5	6	5	5.3
4-A	5	6	5	4	5.0
5-I	6	5	5	3	4.3
6-A	6	6	5	5	5.3
7-A	5	6	4	4	4.6
8-A	6	6	4	6	5.3
9-A	5	6	6	6	6.0
10-A	6	6	5	5	5.3
11-I	5	3	4	5	4.0
12-I	5	5	4	4	4.3
13-A	6	6	5	6	5.6
14-I	5	5	3	4	4.0
15-A	6	6	5	6	5.6
16-I	6	5	5	5	5.0
17-I	6	1	3	1	1.6
18-I	5	1	4	2	2.3
19-I	5	4	5	2	3.6
20-I	6	2	5	1	2.6
Total A's:	57	58	49	52	53.0
Total I's:	54	36	43	32	37.0

Scale: 0-Rarely 3-Occasionally 6-Almost Always

As figure 3 indicates, all four surveys completed put Agnes in the exemplary follower category.

Figures, averages and grids can hardly capture the essence of what makes Agnes an exemplary follower. Only when you talk to her and hear her story can you fully appreciate the work she had done and the manner in which she has pursued

Figure 3
Followership Assessment Matrix



her professional and volunteer work. What follows is an examination of the skills that Kelley identifies as necessary for the exemplary follower and examples of how Agnes possesses those skills.

Job Skills:

The first job skill that Kelley discusses is that of focus and commitment. Agnes is clear that she made a commitment to her supervisor that they would work together. They entered service at approximately the same time, and partnered

throughout their career time together. Their working relationship lasted over 46 years and continues socially to this day. This focus and commitment was a two-way street however. Agnes describes her supervisor as being generous in return. For her good work and dedication, he saw to it that she was promoted and compensated generously. But Agnes was also highly committed to the organization she worked for. She saw working for the state government as her service to her government. Agnes did not accept her first role for the money. As a matter of fact she took a leave of absence from her regular job in order to work for the legislative session, which at that time consisted of only 60 days every other year.

Agnes carries her strong commitment into her volunteer work as well. Volunteering up to four days a week, plus extra time on the side. She is dependable and works whatever hours are required to get the work done. She also works independently, preferring to be taught the entire job and then given the freedom to complete it on her own. She enjoys variety, currently volunteering for her church, local senior center, regional medical center and other local agencies.

Agnes credits her supervisor for his efforts in training her and all of his employees. She was, however, a 'star' employee. Agnes received formal business training prior to starting her work. She continued to train by taking courses at the University of Minnesota and attending lectures and seminars sponsored at the capitol. She developed both personal and professional skills that were necessary to achieve higher positions within the organization. Agnes described herself as extremely shy, however, learned to overcome her shyness in order to be a messenger, page and clerk at the front desk of the state legislature. This fits with

Kelly's requirement that exemplary followers have competence in critical path activities.

Her volunteer work is approached with the same competence. Eager to learn as well as to teach, Agnes, even at age 83, is willing to try new things. She has entered the technological age by learning computer systems, duplicating systems and advanced telecommunications equipment. Agnes will try anything and is generally successful. Her personal goal is to do her work to perfection, but willingly holds herself accountable for the mistakes she makes. Agnes is also keenly aware of her surroundings, encouraging others to raise the level of their work to a higher standard. Agnes said, "I can't stand incompetence. People need to be more dedicated to their work."

The final job skill that Kelley requires is that of initiative in increasing value to the organization. Agnes accomplished that through a variety of means. She developed personal relationships with others that she worked with. She acknowledges the hard work and dedication of all legislators and governors with whom she worked, regardless of party affiliation. She was fair and worked hard by maintaining her focus on doing the very best job she could. She understood that her work was critical to the operations of the state government, recognizing that her work was 'historical' in nature. She also stresses that she was proud of the work she did and always focused on what she was expected to do.

Organizational Skills

Relationships are critical to the exemplary follower. Kelley references three different organizational relationships that an exemplary follower must nurture: team, organizational and leader. Agnes accomplishes all three.

Agnes was a part of a team of almost 25 people. As pages, they had to work together. Later as her areas of responsibility grew, she continued to be a part of a team. She describes her supervisor as, “ruthless in setting expectations”, and therefore she felt that all of her teammates worked equally. Although she never obtained an official supervisory position, Agnes oversaw the work of others on her team. She also credits her supervisor for his conflict management style. “He didn’t take sides, people had to work it out”, Agnes said. Agnes said that they knew that it was individual team members’ responsibility to work out their differences. This made their team stronger.

Teamwork is still a major part of Agnes’ volunteer work. As a volunteer, she is often given work to do from a variety of different people. She sees the value in helping all of these teams out. Although not necessarily identifying with a specific team, Agnes is aware of the teamwork that is necessary on an organizational level.

Her work as a page gave Agnes access to a wide range of people. She acknowledges that she was able to use her position to “get to know a lot of people”. Organizational networks are another of the organizational skills Kelley suggests that exemplary followers have. During her forty-plus years of service, Agnes worked with a large number of legislators and governors, not to mention all of the administrative staff that supported these individuals. She speaks of her working relationships with many of them as well as many social occasions as well. She knew that her work

affected all of these individuals and her work ethic made her a valuable asset to all of them. At the time of her retirement, Agnes' organizational network became clear. "People like her are the unsung heroes who make the Legislature look good because the nuts and bolts are being taken care of," said Peter Popovich, state Supreme Court Associate Justice, who served in the legislature from 1953 to 1963. (Dawson) Martin Sabo, a former Minnesota House speaker said, "One of those conscientious, always pleasant, valuable and indispensable people who make the Statehouse work." (Dawson) In 1989, then Governor Rudy Perpich proclaimed an Agnes Anderson day. Dawson summarizes his research into Agnes as follows:

"Through her quiet dedication to duty and pleasing personality, Anderson appears to have earned the professional and personal respect of everyone with whom she has had contact. And this reporter, to whom Anderson offered a second piece of delicious homemade fudge supplied by a house colleague, could agree with that."

Being a part of the organizational network is still important to Agnes. As a volunteer, she is able to participate fully in the life of the organizations she now serves. She is friendly and popular. Her commitment to these organizations is clear; she believes in them first and works for them second. As a volunteer, she is able to pick and choose--it is certainly not for economic gain.

Agnes' relationship with her supervisor of 46 years is solid. The relationship between the follower and leader is the final organizational skill that Kelly discusses. "My supervisor and I disagreed, but we respected our relationship and therefore I could speak my mind", said Agnes. Agnes acknowledges that her relationship with her supervisor was both professional and social. There were always limits, but they confided in each other. It is clear through their continuing relationship that they

became very good friends. “We strived to make our supervisor look good.” Agnes recognized that the goal of her team was just that--to make the supervisor look good. The supervisor received the credit for the work the team did, but also shared that recognition with the team. Her supervisor describes Agnes as, “a good, loyal, dedicated worker who puts in long hours and doesn’t complain.” Leaders currently working with Agnes express that same confidence.

Values

The final skill set that Kelly requires is the means by which the exemplary follower exercises a ‘courageous conscience’, which they use as a guide for their work and their relationships. Kelley offers a specific definition, stating, “the ability to judge right from wrong and the fortitude to take appropriate steps toward what one believes is right.” (p. 168)

To discuss Agnes without recognizing her strong spiritual beliefs would be a great misrepresentation of the foundation on which she lives her life. Agnes is clear that during her work at the legislature it was, “squeaky clean and the objective of the legislature was honesty.” This honesty and integrity was important to Agnes because it represented her core values well. She was able to see her work as helping to accomplish important tasks. She remained in her position for 46 years, because she believed that she was working for dedicated people, who were serving the people of Minnesota. She admires that in them. For Agnes, she was able to find a match between her own core values and the values of the people she worked with. She also identified the “good” that was in the work she did and how the organization

she worked for supported the general population. Agnes was a servant of the people then, and works diligently as a servant of the people still today.

Observations and Remarks

Since the very beginning of my leadership studies almost six years ago, I have often struggled with the role of the follower and how the follower-leader relationship works. Leadership studies make little reference to the follower specific, rather focusing on the role of the leaders and their relationship to the followers. Followership seemed to be less important. But Robert Kelley has broken through that barrier. He and others are beginning to take notice of the changing paradigm that exists in organizational dynamics and are seeing the real power of the follower and the interdependent relationship that exists between follower and leader.

The skills that Kelley suggests an exemplary follower must have are also the skills an exemplary leader must possess as well. Both followers and leaders must have job and organizational skills, and perhaps the key component to each is the addition of a values component. The notion of 'courageous conscience' that followers and leaders share seems vitally important to the relationship. This seems to be the area of greatest need in organizations today. Educational opportunities exist in a wide variety of options. Technology is advancing the ways in which we gather and share information. Specific job skills, especially technical, require employees to invest large amounts of time into learning very specific sets of skills. The competitive job market searches and rewards those individuals with the highest competency levels for their industries and encourage others to move from one

career field to another. Competence is measured broadly, with organizations willing to offer opportunities to anyone willing to make a commitment to learn their organizations. And employees realize that organizations are operating in an increasingly competitive marketplace. Competence alone does not provide for security in rapidly changing corporate structures. Employee ownership and smaller company structures all encourage increased initiative, which increases not only the employees value to the organization, but also the value of the organization itself.

Likewise employees are more aware of organizational networks. Team is a common workplace dynamic, and technological advances have placed the entire organization just a few keystrokes away. Organizational networks exist well beyond the walls of our office buildings, now stretching globally. And as management studies are replaced with leadership studies, an increasing number of workers are gaining insights into the importance of people relationships and the real work of modern organizational leaders. It seems that our skills base is advancing. But what of our core values?

This is the area in which I believe that follower has the advantage and in which leaders have the greatest opportunity to learn from followers. Followers confront conflicting values daily. Both Kelley and Chaleff make specific references to the courage it takes to be a follower. The courage to have the strength of character to stand up against organizational hierarchy and to challenge the decision and direction leaders are taking. Followers must rely on the willingness of leaders to support them in times of discourse and to offer followers opportunities to express their ideas, interests and concerns. Followers have their fingers on the pulse of our

modern organizations and yet remain dependent upon the strength of ethical and participative leadership for their security.

The exciting news is that Kelley has given us the theory that allows us to understand and identify these unique, valuable and highly gifted individuals. He has given name to the group of individuals who account for more than eighty-percent of the success of any project. And he has de-mystified the major myths that surround leadership. He has challenge both followers and leaders alike to focus on a common vision, to work collaboratively, to lead and follow as our skills, relationships and interests permit us and to encourage, support and promote each other. A paradigm shift is clearly needed and is underway. But even chaos becomes predictable over time, if we are willing to wait and let things happen naturally.

Margaret Wheatly (1999), in Leadership and the New Science, challenges us to be open to the new science. We must be open to understand that the follower-leader-organization relationship is part of a whole system and we must give our attention to “relationships within those networks.” (p10)

I titled this paper, Followership: Why Leadership Works, and I believe that followership is why leadership works. My suspicions on the role of the follower have been confirmed and my role as a leader has been enhanced along the way.

Followership does not diminish leadership in any way. Followership is the reality that leaders face each day, it is the reason that leaders exist and it is the challenge that leaders must face, openly, ethically, courageously, and immediately.

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