WHO IS IN CHARGE HERE?

A FEMINIST COMMUNICOLOGY OF FOLLOWERSHIP AND LEADERSHIP IN AN ACADEMIC ORGANIZATION

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A

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Abstract

This feminist critical study explicates the ways that followership is conceptualized at an academic organization in the Pacific Northwest. Through the use of qualitative methods, stories were solicited providing descriptions of events that define the hegemonically masculine ways that followership is conceptualized, suggesting the need for a feminist critical analysis and revisioning. A number of themes emerged from conversational interviews including: conceptual verisimilitude, archetypes of leadership, alternative conceptions of followership, the role of action in leadership and followership, and the emergent organization. The capta gathered from this qualitative study suggest a revisioning of human organization and recognizes leadership and followership as existing in a reciprocally defining communicative relationship. Leadership and followership are found to be constructed in an existential exchange addressing a specific need within an organization and its immediate requirements. When viewed from this communicative perspective organizational members come to develop a more sophisticated, relational, and dialectic understanding of the construction of leadership and followership

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Introduction

"A leader without followers is just a guy [sic] *going for a walk."*

Aaron Sorkin, creator of television drama "The West Wing."

There is a vast leadership industry of truly staggering proportions, such that the discourse of leadership has become ubiquitous (Gronn, 2003). This discourse is evidenced in the mushrooming of leadership centers, wording of advertisements for job vacancies, and of course, reflected in an enormous body of conceptual and research literature. Far from presenting a cohesive vision of leadership, much of the conceptual and research literature is fragmented and incongruous, and rarely recognizes the relational and interdependent nature of the leadership-followership phenomenon (Collinson, 2006). How is it possible then, with this seeming range of scholarship devoted to the topic, that we as researchers and practitioners know so little about leadership? What is the impact of our understanding of leadership upon Western organizations? What changes when commentators and scholars privilege words such as leader, leading, and leadership as discursive modes representing organizational reality, rather than terms like follower and followership? All these questions seem salient to any serious discussion of leadership, and shall be addressed in this paper.

Leadership is less about what qualities or traits a "leader" possesses than a complex series of interactions between organizational members (Collinson, 2005). It stands to reason that leadership is something that is performed in day-to-day interactions in contemporary Western organizations. Kelley (1992) estimates that leaders spend 80 percent of their time exhibiting follower behaviors, while Deetz et al. (2000) asserts that

leadership is a social construction that is created, maintained, and transformed through communication.

Within every organization, a hierarchy exists that privileges certain archetypes of leadership. These Western archetypes tend to privilege men, European Americans, heterosexuals, the able-bodied, and middle and upper classes. On the basis of these varying levels of privilege, dominant group members occupy management positions that they use—consciously or unconsciously—to create and maintain communication systems (leader/follower and manager/subordinate) that reflect, reinforce, and promote these archetypes of leadership. Directly or indirectly, these dominant notions of leadership impede the progress of those persons whose lived experiences are not reflected in the organizational systems of communication (Orbe, 1998). Although representing a widely diverse array of lived experiences, women, people of color, gays, lesbians, bisexuals, people with disabilities, and those from a lower socioeconomic status will share a similar position—one that renders them marginalized and underrepresented within Western organizations and, effectively, precludes their ability to achieve organizational promotions or management opportunities. These organizations, effectively, leave persons who do not fit the standard leader archetype marginalized and underrepresented within the managerial hierarchy.

It is the role of critical organizational communication theorists to solicit perspectives, stories, myths, and archival materials that reflect and reinforce these organizational realities, while interrogating the ways in which organizational members are privileged and subjugated according to their adherence to these organizational norms,

which are most often reflected through autobiographical narratives. The most convenient and powerful method for soliciting these notions of self is through narrative. Narrative is not just a matter of pure words or thought. Human thought processes are largely metaphorical. By soliciting metaphors and legends, I intend to deconstruct, in the broadest sense of the term, and gain further insight into the construction of leadership and followership in terms of something less ethereal.

You're a what! White men as feminist critical researchers?

Feminism is a political orientation and practice that seeks to improve social conditions for women. It speaks with one voice in characterizing the world as patriarchal and the culture we inherit as masculinist (Crotty, 1998). At the same time, feminism is a pluralistic enterprise, which produces many definitions of feminism. Martin (1993) posits,

> Although most women experience the disadvantages of gender inequality and discrimination, not all women are feminists, and although most men benefit from sexist arrangements and practices, some men are feminists. (p. 276)

When understood as an informed political orientation and practice, feminism is not determined by or synonymous with biological sex or gender. Often, feminism is a lens through which critical theorists—of all sexes and genders—come to understand and question dominant institutional structures.

There are those who would assert without qualification that a man can have nothing valid or useful to say about feminism or feminist critical research (Stanley & Wise, 1983). While there are occasional references to male feminists in contemporary

scholarship, many feminist writers would find the term oxymoronic. However, we are all active participants in our own freedom and oppression. Freire (1972) asserts it is "the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well" (p. 20). Liberation cannot occur without a dialogue that incorporates the oppressor as well as the oppressed. For, in an oppressive interaction, no one is oppressed more than the oppressor him- or herself (Freire, 1972). Adorno (1974) asserts,

> Not only is the self entwined in society; it owes society its existence in the most literal sense. All its content comes from society or at any rate from its relation to the object. It grows richer the more freely it develops and reflects this relation, while it is limited, impoverished and reduced by the separation and hardening that it lay claim to as an origin. (pp. 153-154)

Ontological questions have historically produced rigid and inflexible constructions of what it means to be man, woman, leader, and follower in the Western world. Hegemonic forms of masculinity permeate the very fabric of society and the culture that sustains and reifies dominant understandings of masculinity (Mumby, 1997). Masculine subjectivities are omnipresent within patriarchal organizations, and thereby privilege and oppress men and women simultaneously.

For many, the goal of feminism is to engage the paradox of a being that is at once central and peripheral to discourse, displayed at the same time as an oddity and the norm, and a being whose understandings are simultaneously asserted and denied, negated and controlled (de Lauretis, 1990). Men engaged in feminist theory and research (particularly white, heterosexual men such as me) face a paradox that derives from a position as the

principle creators of institutionalized power and dominance. Men are at once complicit and resistant to patriarchal forms of domination. Just as women find themselves in a paradoxical relationship to feminism and thus a part of the feminist cause, men need to confront and question the masculine institutions, such as leadership, that at once constrain and privilege them in order to contribute to feminism and feminist research (Mumby, 1998).

Leadership is a socially constructed cultural definition, which suggests a specific way of thinking about, categorizing, and treating "subordinate" human beings. It has no traditional or positivistic scientific basis; rather it is a social construction within U.S. American society that continues to privilege hegemonic forms of masculinity and subjugate opposing subjectivities. It supports an ideology that legitimizes social inequality between groups with different ancestries, national origins, and histories. Systems of power and privilege are then constructed around the concept of leadership, resulting in a systematic and ongoing form of patriarchal sorting. A hierarchy that privileges men, European Americans, heterosexuals, the able-bodied, and middle and upper socio-economic class reinforce these constructions of hegemonic, masculine leader metaphors, myths, and legends in Western organizations. On the basis of these varying levels of privilege, white men create and maintain systems of communication that reflect and reinforce these discursive realities. These dominant communication structures disadvantage organizational members who have not been socialized according to these hegemonically masculine traditions.

By virtue of my position as a white heterosexual man within a patriarchal society, the world often reflects and reinforces my lived experiences. As a masculine subject, I share a common field of experiences with dominant visions of leadership in modern organizations. In fact, modern organizations were crafted by white heterosexual men, to benefit white heterosexual men. This privilege provides a unique opportunity for me to critique and undermine dominant masculine subjectivities in contemporary organizations. Mumby (1998) suggests,

> So, perhaps the role of the male feminist is to understand and critique concentric subjects--those that reproduce and mirror the hegemonic, unmarked center of patriarchy. (p. 167)

In this context, the role of self as the researcher—and research tool—is to interrupt and break the monologic reproduction of patriarchal norms in organizations, and to pursue an undermining of the notion of a singular, and totalizing form of leadership. This focus on masculine subjectivities in organizations allows the male feminist researcher to examine the possibility of masculinity as the object of study; institutional structures that are seen as peripheral to organizational life, such as followership, can be subjected to the same level of examination that leadership has historically received. Through this focus on masculine subjectivities, feminist researchers can develop a more sophisticated, relational, and dialectic understanding of the construction of leadership and followership in organizations. The hope is to highlight the complex and often contradictory ways that masculinity is constructed within Western organizations.

For,

> A critical focus on masculinity provides an important means by which male feminists can both contribute to a critique of male power and explore possibilities for more democratic organizing processes. (Mumby, 1998, p. 181)

A word of caution: The jargon associated with leadership and followership is confusing and contradictory; much of such confusion stems from the conflating of hierarchical status with leadership or followership. This focus on structure and function reflects a tired and inaccurate understanding of organizations existing in much the same way as a container, whereby the walls, floors, desks, etc., constitute the organization. This perspective fails to take into consideration the intersubjective nature of human communication. Organizations are constituted and reified in communication, and are, in fact, constituted in human interaction (Deetz et al., 2000).

To be clear, terms such as manager/ment, superior, and subordinate reflect a condition and not a position within an organization, and in no way reflect leadership or followership in organizations. Leadership and followership are an interdependent relationship that exists independent of organizational hierarchy. For example, administrative assistants often rank very low within organizational hierarchy, but often control the flow of communication and the activities of their organizational superiors. This leadership behavior is clearly not recognized within the organizational hierarchy, but is necessary for organizations to operate.

In discussing the role of leadership and followership in organizations, I concede that I am bound by hegemonic discourses and their attendant sedimented vocabularies

and meanings. Despite the fact our very language is imbued with notions that nouns, like leader and follower, produce independent sovereign objects, I intend to appropriate the same terms for alternative purposes, improvising the language in ways that may be initially awkward, in the hope of enacting a potentially transformative form of resistance. By translating poststructuralist and feminist theories into more familiar and utilitarian terms, I believe organizational actors in their everyday lives will be more readily able to take advantage of the micro-political space offered by feminist poststructuralist theorizing of leadership and followership.

Chapter 1

Review of Related Literature

"Organizations are not there in nature, functioning to be revealed through systematic research; rather, we create together the very idea of an organization, and whatever characteristics we attribute to it."

(Kenneth Gergen & Tojo Joseph, 1996, p. 356)

Much of the scholarship examining leadership and followership is myopically focused and has separated leaders from followers. This study intends to position followership as a more relational and social process that is dependent on fluid, multi-directional, social networks of influence than previously thought. It suggests that leadership and followership is a relational dialectic that involves complex and shifting human dynamics, taking into account the artificial separation of leaders and followers in ways that neglect their dynamic interactions, and fails to recognize the often asymmetrical nature of leader-follower interactions. Collinson (2005, 2006) discusses three specific dialectics that have been largely ignored or misinterpreted in leadership literature: the dialectics of power-resistance; consent-dissent; and masculine-feminine. Rather than arguing for a follower-centric view, Collinson promotes a more critically informed and dialectic understanding of the complex interactional relationships between leaders and followers, indicating that leadership or followership perspectives share a tendency to underestimate questions of control and resistance.

This critical dialectic approach calls into question the hegemonic view of leader-follower relations as inherently consensual. Resistance is always just under the surface waiting for an opportunity to be expressed. Leaders cannot and should not attempt to predict followers' actions or motivation, reinforcing the deep-seated power asymmetries inherent within Western organizations, often reinforcing ambiguous and potentially contradictory processes. Such attempts at control stimulate resistance which is disciplined, shaped, and restricted by these passive/received leadership perspectives. In addition, leadership dialectics draw attention to leaders' and followers' gendered identities. The notions of the leader and the follower are deeply embedded identities, particularly in Western societies. Yet, there is growing concern that leadership dualisms and a situated view of self are no longer sustainable. Leadership-followership dynamics are progressively viewed as nebulous, enigmatic, incongruous, and paradoxical phenomena. Collinson (2005) concludes by calling for more research that examines these "multiple, shifting, and contradictory" (p. 1436) identities of leaders and followers. Exploring how these subjectivities are negotiated in practice within contemporary power relations may very well enhance our understanding of leadership dialectics.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) assert that dichotomous forms of thinking are reflective of the body schema itself. At the most basic physiologic level, humans systems work in pairs interdependently (e.g., heart, lungs, kidneys). Recognition of the value of pairs, whether they be eyes, arms, or dyadic relationships is reflected in the process of human sense making. This attention to dichotomous thinking is reflected in much of the contemporary literature on leadership and followership. Much of this research attends to

leadership (Boerner et al., 2007; Choi & Mai-Dalton, 1999; Erhart & Klein, 2001; Hunt et al., 1999; Miller et al., 2003) or followership (Challef, 1995; Dixon & Westbrook, 2003; Kelley, 1992) as the driving force of organizations, attending to and reinforcing archetypal constructions of leadership and followership according to and reflecting masculine traits. This tendency to attend to leadership or followership as monologic structures in organization is strongly reflected in Leadership, Management, and Communication literature.

1.1 Leader-centric theories of organizing

The importance of "leadership talk" in the Western world is undeniable; merely browsing the business section of any bookstore makes an indelible impression. Leadership is "an amorphous phenomenon that has intrigued us since people began organizing" (Wheatley, 1999, p. 13). This fascination borders on obsession with the rampant development of leadership institutes, countless books, internet sites, and thousands of scholarly articles wrestling with the concept; one can scarcely avoid discussions of leadership in the 21st century.

Leadership has been contextualized in a multitude of ways within human organizations, and to date there is no widely accepted definition. At the very least there have been three evolutionary phases in the scholarly discourse on leadership: first, leadership was understood to be situated within certain individuals; next, environment and context were considered as factors influencing leadership; the third stage within this evolution was a recognition of styles and approaches affecting organizational outcomes.

According to trait approaches to leadership, researchers and practitioners assume that "an individual's physical and psychological features [are] the best indicators of leadership potential" (Hackman & Johnson, 2000, p. 63). From this perspective, it is almost entirely reliant upon specific individuals to provide leadership. Hegemonic notions of leadership are widely reflected within dominant discourses on leadership in Western organizations. Hill (1999) laments, "This conventional wisdom is further reinforced by biographies and media that often build arguments about the success or failure of a leader around the presence or absence of certain leadership qualities" (p. 201).

Contemporary models of trait leadership tend to focus on task-oriented leaders that establish performance goals that are high but realistic for subordinates; spend a great deal of time planning and scheduling tasks to be accomplished; and, insure that equipment and technical assistance are available. Transactional leadership styles are understood to work well with subordinates who value achievement, have a high need for structure, and value stability and security at work. Conversely, subordinates who value interpersonal relations and are eager to take risks are likely to oppose the task-oriented leader focus on routine task achievement. Transactional leaders identify the needs of their subordinates, clarify and negotiate aspired goals, and regulate follower behavior using contingent positive or negative reinforcement. Transactional leadership means that followers agree, accept, or comply with the leader in exchange for praise, rewards, and resources for the avoidance of disciplinary action.

Transactional leadership is explicitly designed to clearly define and reward in-role performance. If the relationship between leaders and followers is mainly regarded as an

economic exchange, doing more than is required or achieving a higher quality than is required will not be appreciated by the leader. As a result, followers act rationally by only committing to as much as will be rewarded.

Recognition of the potential for all organizational members to participate in, and contribute to, the success of organizations brought rise to the second evolution in leadership literature. According to the situational approach, leadership is contextual and "effective leaders address the functional demands of any situation" (Hill, 1999, p. 200). Differences in leadership successes are related to talk and relational structures within the organization. Followers are understood to have the potential to negatively impact the efficiency and production of an organization. As contemporary organizations have recognized that followers can resist and sabotage a leader's efforts, they have moved toward these group theories of leadership. Such theory recognizes that leadership is not something that can be turned off and on like a light switch. However, it continues to recognize followers as potential barriers to leadership, but not necessarily as independent organizational actors. Ultimately, in the situational leadership approach followers and leaders remain dichotomously related according to a predetermined division of labor.

Followers are finally acknowledged as participating in the leadership of Western organizations in the third evolution of leadership literature. This approach to leadership is often reflected in transformational and self-sacrifical leaders. Transformational leaders motivate followers through appeals which "go beyond basic needs to satisfy a follower's higher-level needs" (Hackman & Johnson, 2000, p. 88), while charismatic leadership is "best conceptualized not as something a leader does to his or her followers, but rather as

a relationship between a leader and his or her followers" (Erhart & Klein, 2001, p. 154). Transformational leaders are assumed to stimulate followers to perform beyond the level of expectations, and enhance quality and quantity of follower performance (Bass, 1981). This type of leader provides meaning, and thereby associates follower identity with the respective organizational goals and problems, and suggests that transformational leadership strengthens the common identity of work groups. In contrast to transactional leadership, it is likely to trigger extra-role (work outside of expectations) behavior.

Self-sacrificial leadership is characterized by a total or partial abandonment, and permanent or temporary postponement of personal interests in the division of labor, distribution of rewards, or the exercise of power. Extant literature indicates that self–sacrifice in the division of labor involves volunteering for more risky or arduous actions, tasks, or turns in organizational settings. This form of self-sacrifice could involve taking the blame or responsibility for failure or mistakes for which one is not solely responsible. Self-sacrifice in the distribution of rewards involves giving up or postponing one's fair and legitimate share of organizational rewards, such as salary, benefits, and recognitions permanently or temporarily. Self-sacrifice in the exercise of power involves voluntarily giving up or refraining from exercising or using the power and personal resources one has by nature of position within the organizational hierarchy.

At the micro level, this theory proposes that self-sacrificial leadership will influence followers' perceptions and attitudes, specifically their attributions of charisma, attributions of legitimacy, and intentions of reciprocity toward the leader. These main effects are said to be moderated by organizational uncertainty and leader competence.

Overall, the results suggest that self-sacrificial leadership will positively influence the followers' perceptions about the leader and their attitudes toward the leader. Followers will respect and be proud of being associated with a self-sacrificial leader, accept the leader as their own (legitimacy), and intend to reciprocate and follow the example of the leader. Historical figures who have exercised self-sacrificial behaviors seem to have elicited similar follower reactions. Such cases suggest that compliance with a leader's request could be gained with self-sacrificial leadership techniques, even when following could require a sacrifice of health and safety of followers.

1.2 Critique of leadership theory

Barker (1997) argues that the ambiguity surrounding what we understand as leadership is central to the struggle of applying leadership theory. Rost (1991) indeed notes that the leadership literature, although vast, is often contradictory, confusing, and lacks cohesion. Certainly, our conception of leadership has evolved to emphasize transformational and relational models of leadership whereby a leader stimulates followers to change their motives, beliefs, values and capabilities so that the followers' own interests and personal goals become congruent with organizational goals (Bass, 1981). In both models there is a common suggestion of a leader inspiring followers to a shared vision. This conceptualization has become widely accepted in the literature (Gronn, 2003). However, some have questioned such mainstream thinking and invite a greater openness to the consideration of leadership that attends to issues of gender, race, and class (Alvesson & Sveningsson, 2003). The notion of a leader inspiring followers to a shared vision represents only one way to think about leadership. This hegemonic

conception of leadership can be described as systems-control thinking. Systems-control orthodoxy tends to promote a rather mechanistic view of organizations and managerial work seeing managing as an activity mainly concerned with "designing and controlling organizations as if they were big machine-like systems rationally devised to meet unambiguous organizational goals" (Watson, 2005, p. 2). Such thinking derives from modernist and universalistic aspirations to maximize control over human circumstances with the manager being viewed as an expert who controls and motivates subordinates to behave in particular ways. Indeed, Barker (2001, p. 479) challenges the notion of relational theories of leadership that cling to the idea that leadership is about leaders supervising subordinates, and about subordinates working hard toward institutional objectives as the primary goal for leadership. The extent then to which new theories provide an alternative perspective of leadership is thus questionable, along with previous conceptualizations, because charismatic and transformational leadership theories continue to be framed by systems-control thinking. Both leadership models then conceptualize leadership in ways that neglect the complexity found in organizational settings. Popular conceptions of leadership portray a notion of leadership that is beyond the ordinary abilities of the majority. The elevated perspective on leadership is largely reflective of white, heterosexual, masculine, archetypal superhuman figures. Stories, myths, and legends reflect the lived experience of a select breed of white heterosexual male, and fail to attend to the rich and complex field of experience in contemporary organizations. Yukl (1999) has suggested rather than focusing on a single person who influences followers, many people can be viewed as contributors to the overall process of leadership

in organizations. A processual communicative view might recognize leadership as an activity which has an explicit focus on the long-term future of the organization where various persons make contributions by way of ideas and actions for the survival of the organization.

1.3 History of followership

Followers are at least as prevalent in organizations as leaders. Not until 1967 had there been official mention of the importance of followership in organizations (Nolan & Harty, 2001). Then in 1988, Robert E. Kelley developed a revolutionary text that recognized the centrality of followership (Frisna, 2005). Ira Chaleff followed with a text of his own, *The Courageous Follower* (1995), bringing the construct of courage to followership analysis. Both of these books call for extensive quantitative research. Of the researchers who took up this challenge were Dixon and Westbrook (2003), who validated "the existence of followership at all organizational levels" (p. 24). The contemporary research on followership is decentralized, though thoughtfully considered in many disciplines. The relative youth of followership as an area of study may contribute to the relative dearth of information available.

Kelley (1992) begins the construction of followership by saying that "followers are the people who act with intelligence, independence, courage, and a strong sense of ethics" (p. 20). Chaleff (1995) and Dixon and Westbrook (2003) add that follower is *not* synonymous with subordinate. Chaleff (1995) also describes a follower as one who shares a common purpose with the leader, believes in what the organization is trying to accomplish, and wants both the leader and the organization to succeed. Dixon and

Westbrook (2003) remark that followers engage body, mind, soul, and spirit in the commonly held purpose and vision of the organization, and that being a follower is a condition not a position, as opposed to the idea of subordinate, which is "mechanical or physical; it is being under the control of the superiors as if in some hypnotic trance." (Dixon & Westbrook, 2003, p. 24) Between these three sources, a general definition of follower has emerged, but there remains no congruous definition.

The Oxford English Dictionary (1971) defines follower as: "one who follows another as his [sic] attendant, servant, retainer, or the like" (p. 1042) Synonyms include adherent, disciple, and partisan. The word followership is defined as "the capacity or willingness to follow a leader" (p. 1043). According to these definitions of follower, a replication of the original leader is implied, and nothing exists in the followership definition to suggest the "capacity or willingness" to follow a leader.

Adhering to the model that followership researchers have laid out, and considering what the dictionary has contributed to the definition of followership, there emerges a definition that is either overwhelmed with attributes of followership or devoid of such. If a definition is to be created, there needs to exist an inclusive definition that suggests the processes that are involved with the role of the follower; most contemporary research fails to address this need.

For the purposes of this research, followership shall be considered: a process whereby organizational members of all hierarchical levels act with intelligence, independence, and courage--engaging mind, body, and soul to forward the commonly held mission and vision of an organization.

1.4 The role of follower is changing and becoming powerful

The role of the follower has been changing drastically in adjustment to changes in the contemporary workplace. Chaleff (1995) argues that current changes in the global economy are laying fertile ground in which new models of followership may sprout. He explains that in the past, strong leadership was needed to get things done, such as building a pyramid or laying a railroad. However, in the information age there are so many interconnected units working for the success of one organization—all answering up a long chain of leaders—one can hardly conceive of an organization where "leaders and followers" aren't required to coordinate their activities in the name of efficiency.

Rather than an idealist leadership focus, there has been a shift to a team focus. Kelley (1992) states "on the office and on the factory floor we see increased emphasis on teams, collaboration, employee ownership, and grass-roots movements" (p. 34). In this shift, the lines are becoming blurred between leaders and followers—if one perspective of leadership or followership is being promoted over the other, it weakens the ability to manage workers efficiently, leading to a single-minded conformism. Reflecting on research from Chaleff (1995), Kelley (1992), and Dixon and Westbrook (2003), it would seem that increased competitiveness in a global economy, addressing followers as sheep unquestionably and blindly obeying managerial commands, proves to be counterproductive and inefficient. In order to achieve a team focus, managers need to criticize their own "astronomical pay, perks, and golden parachutes" (Kelley, 1992, p. 106) and in turn incentives to the followers, granting "empowerment, job enrichment, reengineering," and strategies of "doing more with less" (Dixon & Westbrook, 2003, p.

23). Leaders and subordinate cooperation will have to be interrogated in order to address the increasingly competitive global business environment.

1.5 Followership can improve organizational efficiency

Not only is the focus shifting to followership to address changes in industry, but followers are said to be an important force behind organizational productivity. Kelley's (1992) research shows that followers contribute 80 percent of the work in an organization, while leaders provide 20 percent. Even those in leadership positions, argues Kelley, spend more time reporting to others—as followers—than leading others (Kelley, 1992). Chaleff states that, "in a healthy organization the leader and the follower, individually and collectively, are serving a common purpose, and they recognize this" (1995, p. 114). How well this relationship works, specifically the quality of followership skills, directly correlates with the organization's success (Brown, 1995). Crockett (1981) states:

> Most good bosses don't like subservience and don't trust yes people. Most bosses want a subordinate who will challenge their ideas, differ with their decisions, give them data, put forward new ideas for doing things, and who will care to be uniquely themselves. (p. 156)

By embracing constructive criticism that comes from the bottom rather than the top, the entire system will be able to sustain itself quicker and more thoroughly. Crockett argues for the importance of developing followership in organizations, and concedes that "leadership is but one strand in the complex web of human relationships that holds our organizations together" (1981, p. 157). In this same way, Lundin and Lancaster (1990)

claim that organizations generating a culture that values followership on the same level as leadership effectively reduce absenteeism and increase productivity.

1.6 Method for quantifying followership

Kelley (1992) indicates that followers, like leaders, rarely understand their communication styles, making it difficult to fulfill organizational roles. To identify the components that determine follower styles, Kelley asked individuals in focus groups to describe the best, worst, and typical followers in their organizations and how followers differ on two dimensions, thinking and engagement. He asserts, somewhat problematically, that the best followers are people who think for themselves and take initiative; while the worst followers need constant structure and supervision; and typical followers take direction and complete jobs on their own after being told what is expected of them.

Upon isolating the key components of followership, Kelley (1992) developed the Self-Assessment Instrument for Follower Styles. Followers often fall into one of five categories based on how they respond to independent thinking and active engagement sections of the assessment: (1) alienated followers are disillusioned independent thinkers focusing much of their energy fighting organizational imperatives; (2) conformists are committed to the organization, but rarely offer original thoughts for fear of supervisory retribution; (3) pragmatists cope with organizational uncertainty by giving just enough to keep their jobs, and are unlikely to be promoted; (4) passive followers contribute little thought or commitment to the organization, relying on external direction and motivation;

(5) exemplary followers are critical thinkers and active participants, frequently contributing innovative ideas and frequently exceeding expectations.

Kelley's (1992) typology provides a useful framework for understanding follower communication styles, but tends to conflate followership with subordination within an organizational hierarchy. Like leaders, some followers may display leadership and followership behaviors simultaneously and alternatively during the course of their work day. Typologies of this ilk are rarely successful at discovering behaviors that are deceptively disguised within other behaviors, such as those listed above. However, uses of repeated and varied measures of leadership and followership have been successful in quantifying followership efficacy (Dixon & Westbrook, 2003). Dixon and Westbrook (2003) assert that followership exists at all levels of the organization. As such, attributions of followership are influenced by organizational level. In fact, attributions of follower behavior have been shown to differ by organizational level, with higher correlations of follower behaviors occurring among organizational supervisors than subordinates.

1.7 Relational theories of leadership

An attempt at a definition must look at the interdependence of leadership and followership, taking into account reactions to common leadership styles. Erhart and Klein (2001) identified characteristics likely to attract a follower to a specific leadership style, specifically identifying follower characteristics associated with a preference for charismatic leadership. They identified and defined characteristics that differentiate followers who are most attracted to charismatic leaders from followers more attracted to

relationship oriented leaders or task oriented leaders. The authors found that followers who are "achievement-oriented," and enjoy taking risks find the charismatic leader vision of exceptional and innovative achievement an inspiration. In contrast, followers that fail to exemplify these traits or who have a high need for structure may feel alienated by the charismatic leader's pension for risk taking.

Meanwhile, relationship-oriented leaders treat subordinates with kindness and respect; emphasize communication with and listening to subordinates; show trust and confidence in subordinates; and provide recognition and appreciation for subordinates' accomplishments. Accordingly, subordinates who value interpersonal relationships with superiors, who have low self esteem, and who value security at work are attracted to relationship-oriented leadership. Conversely, subordinates who value achievement may be put off by the relationship-oriented leadership inattention to accomplishment. Similarly, employees with a need for structure may feel that this leadership style is too focused on employee welfare, while neglecting to attend to task structure and guidance.

Follower and leader identities are frequently a predicament and repercussion of each other (Dixon & Westbrook, 2003) suggesting that followers also impact leaders' identities and are inextricably linked, mutually reinforcing, and shifting within specific contexts. This understanding of followership as an empowering and exemplary position within organizations suggests a possibility of examining followership from outside of the historically dichotomous understandings of followership as Dixon and Westbrook (2003) have done.

Kelley (1992) asserts that followership and leadership are roles, not people, and that most managers play the role of both follower and leader in any given day. This recognition of the socially constructed nature of organizational hierarchies led to a recognition of the relational nature of leaders and followers. This interdependent relationship between follower and leader recognizes the interconnected nature of the leadership-followership dynamic. Follett (1996) argues that followers and leaders must follow a common purpose on which their work is focused. Burns (1978) writes that leaders and followers have "inseparable functions" (p. 20) but different roles. Gilbert (1985) coined the term organizational commitment, which recognized an implicit contract between superior and subordinate on very effective work teams. In such a commitment, both superior and subordinate exhibit a commitment to the organization's goals as well as to the success of each other. Haslam and Platow (2001) reason that a leader's ability to motivate subordinates is contingent on her ability to behave in a way that exemplifies the attitudes and ideals that are shared with the subordinate; finding that leaders and followers are most effective when both parties believe they are partners in a shared social categorical relationship that positively differentiates their ingroup from other outgroups. From this perspective, leaders who adopt rigid leadership styles are destined to be swept away with the tides of change. As followership theorists discuss the relational nature of leaders and followers, positing the interdependence of leaders and followers and the idea of leader-follower partnerships, leadership theorists also recognize leader-follower relations, but often attend to a leader-centric perspective. However, these contingency theories of leadership often myopically focus on the ways that leaders can

affect follower motivations. This approach fails to address the hegemonic view of leader-follower relations as inherently consensual. Collinson (2005) tells us that leaders cannot, and should not, attempt to predict followers' actions or motivations. Such behavior only reinforces deep-seated power asymmetries, stimulating resistance rather than reducing it. It seems clear that contemporary followership literature places emphasis on the two-way nature of leadership and followership. From this perspective, it is essential that studies of leadership and followership interrogate perceptions of both leaders and followers in describing followership communication styles.

Haslam and Platow (2001) found that support for leaders was enhanced when their decisions affirmed a distinct social identity shared by their followers. This critique troubled extant research that addressed followership in terms of the ways that performance could be manipulated and popular conclusions that often appeal to some special quality of a leader-transformational, which allows a group to exceed expectations. Haslam and Platow questioned the veracity of transactional approaches that see leadership as the outcome of a perfect math between the leader's character and the situation that he or she confronts. Transactional leadership relies on rational decisions made based on somewhat tangible conditions, indicating this approach fails to recognize that leadership, and the social phenomena in which it is implicated, appears to be more than just a process of interpersonal exchange. Haslam and Platow recommended a discourse oriented approach that paves the way for a novel analysis of the process through which leaders and followers prove capable of mutual support and enhancement, asserting that true leadership emerges when leaders and followers define themselves in

terms of a shared social identity. More specifically, leadership centers around the process of creating, coordinating, and controlling a social relationship that defines what leader and follower have in common and what makes them special. Success in such an endeavor is likely to depend on the capacity of the leader to act in a way that affirms and advances the ingroups' position relative to salient outgroups. In this regard, leaders' capacity to generate support will be enhanced to the extent they are able to promote the collective interest and aspirations of the group. Followers will be most inspired by a leader who demonstrates a willingness to support those ingroup members who epitomize what makes them superior and unique. While this research is clearly critical in orientation, it employed quantitative methods--questionnaires--challenging the validity of extant truth claims and presenting an alternative method for understanding followership, while focusing on the tenants of positivism, causation, prediction, and control. However, there is still no recognized acceptance of, nor support for, the traditional leader-follower hierarchy. Instead, Dixon and Westbrook (2003) recommend a new construct for leader-follower relations in an ever globalizing world. Their study captures the theoretical requirement and research finding, applying followership in organizations by recognizing leaders as followers. This reframing of followership suggests that organizations should consider alternative modes of recruiting, retention, and personnel development in an attempt to develop an organization supportive of this paradigm shift.

These entries show how narratives of leadership and followership can be used to gain insight into organizations and organizational culture. Communication scholars, anthropologists, and sociologists variously define culture. Most definitions involve a

combination of language use, symbols, rituals, norms, values, and standards that are understood and used by all cultural members. In discussing the cultural construct in organizations, Deetz et al., (2000) assert that culture is not something that an organization has; rather culture is what an organization is. Culture is often implicit, and deeply imbedded in organizational reality, and therefore is both powerful and challenging to identify. This integrated view of culture (Deetz et al., 2000) is constituted of internal and external values and behaviors. From this perspective, culture exists in a dialectic tension wherein values affect behavior and behavior affects values; culture is a set of loosely held symbols which are constructed and maintained by a series of attitudes, ideologies, behaviors, and language that are generated from within and outside of the organization. On the basis of dominant communication structures, e.g., leadership and followership, organizational members make sense of shared and unshared values, beliefs, and assumptions.

The organizational culture perspective involves an understanding of organizations as constituted in communication between members. Scholars using this perspective focus on the complex environments that inform and are informed by organizational members' "talk." The social construction of reality perspective is the foundation of this understanding. For social constructionists all meaningful reality is socially constructed through narrative (Crotty, 1998):

Taking into account the role of culture in organizations, Morgan (1997) states,

> …the formation of a group or the process of becoming a leader ultimately hinges on an ability to create a shared sense of reality. We find that cohesive groups are

> those that arise around shared understandings, while fragmented groups tend to be those characterized by multiple realities. In seeing organizations as cultures, we can see almost every aspect in a new way. (p. 145)

When organizations are viewed as culture, new personnel recruitment focuses on individuals who are supportive of organizational mission and values. Managers are encouraged to demonstrate appreciation by listening when challenged and to accept constructive criticism in an attempt to avoid alienation of valued members of their organizational culture. As organizations become more participative, formerly opaque boundaries between leaders and followers become transparent. From this informed perspective, followership is seen as vital to the production and efficiency in organizations and equal in status and prominence to leadership (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004; Collinson, 2005, 2006; Haslam & Platow, 2001)

Collinson (2006) found that many leadership and followership studies focus on the way leaders influence follower identities, yet ignore the possibility that both leader and follower identities are shaped in social interaction. He builds on a repertoire of follower identities, describing in particular the workplace enactment of conformist, resistant, and dramaturgical selves. Central to this argument is that there is incredible complexity in the creation of both leader and follower identities.

He takes care in deconstructing functionalist perspectives that separate individuals from what phenomenologists have called Lifeworld, contending that the social nature of self is not necessarily automatically in balance as many social psychological models contend, but may also create unresolved tensions for followers. Viewing identity as a

self-regulating mechanism fails to take into consideration the conflicts, ambiguities, and tensions that are inherent in the creation of follower identities in the workplace. Much of the available literature limits analysis of followership to aspects of conformity, completely under-estimating the possibility of conformity having a negative impact upon organizations, suggesting that followers' desire to conform is positive for organizations. However, career success might not achieve the material identity security or the sense of control followers desire. While the renumeration, status, and perks of more senior positions could enhance identities, highly ambitious followers may feel compelled to work longer hours and produce more stress which often leads to burnout and leaving one's job. Eisenberg and Goodall (2001) assert, "Several organizational theorists propose a new interpretation of workaholism as a disease, a condition brought about by the profound influences that organizations have over how people define themselves through their work" (p. 17).

In this view, organizational power structures may destabilize the employee's personality and produce unhealthy levels of resistance. Collinson's (2005, 2006) work highlights the importance of resistant selves in the workplace, suggesting that identity construction in organizations may be shaped by differentiating self from organization as much as relating self to organization. The pervasive nature of resistance then makes it difficult to see a way that leaders can control followers' identities and practices. Followers may also feel compelled to self-censor for fear of the consequences that dissent may produce. In these instances silence is viewed as a form of resistance, acknowledging silence as a powerful form of communication for the oppressed. Collinson stresses the

importance and extent of followers' "dramaturgical selves," especially in the context of increased work place surveillance. In response to leaders' tendencies to surveil their employees, followers have become skilled at choreographing their actions in such a way as to produce strategically oriented outcomes that stress their well-being as opposed to the mission and vision of the organization.

Identity is open, negotiable, and ambiguous; given the socially constructed, and shifting character of selves, attempts to construct coherent identities may produce contradictory effects. Consequently, researchers should not assume that leaders have the ability to effectively manipulate follower identities. In sum, follower and leader identities are frequently a predicament and repercussion of each other. This suggests that followers also impact leaders' identities and are inextricably linked, mutually reinforcing, and shifting within specific contexts. This understanding of followership as an empowering and exemplary position within organizations suggests a possibility of examining followership from outside of the historically dichotomous understandings of followership.

1.8 Feminist critiques of relational theories

Ollilainen and Calasanti (2007) sought to test relational theories of leadership that assume self-managing small work groups ameliorate gender biases that reproduce gender based inequalities in the work place examining the ways participation in mixed-sex, self-managing "teams" are mediated by gender. They hypothesized that attempts to flatten hierarchy and promote task and power sharing in relational leadership models fail to account for gendered and culturally accepted notions of teamwork that reflect and

reinforce patriarchal hierarchy as evidenced by the persistent use of family and household metaphors within participating organizations that conjure images of traditional gendered division of labor and heterosexuality. In fact, the use of family metaphors encourages women to take on traditional relational tasks, which has the potential to distract women from more culturally valued work.

The authors suggest an opposing perspective to relational theories of leadership, one that understands mixed sex/self-managing teams to fail in reducing the influence of gendered norms of categorization, or in reducing the marginalizing role of hierarchy. An affirmative step is taken toward addressing gendered processes of organizing by demonstrating the symbolic importance of gendered metaphors. These findings indicate that mixed-gender, shared-leadership teams might reduce gender based discrimination in theory, but fail to address the culturally informed metaphors that team members use that reinforce patriarchal and hierarchical notions of teamwork. As organizational members attempt to recognize each other as individuals, commonly employed metaphors draw upon gendered notions of organizing, like family relations, which may be reproducing gender inequalities, even as organizational members engage in more equality based roles in organizations.

Ashcraft (2005) examined the changing dynamics of male commercial airline pilots in light of policies aimed at transformational and group models of leadership in commercial airplanes. These policies run counter to a long legacy of transactional leadership that position the commercial airline captain as all seeing and all knowing. According to this notion, the support personnel on board serve at the pleasure of the

captain, and certainly do not question the captain. An industry wide change in pilot philosophy, training, and practice known as Cockpit Resource Management (CRM) is the source of conflict that Ashcraft examines. CRM was developed and implemented in response to numerous studies that indicated catastrophic results of crew members remaining silent for fear of challenging the captain's authority in times of crisis. Ashcraft found that commercial airline pilots have responded with seven discursive tactics in resisting the emasculating potential of CRM. Pilots have revisioned themselves from omnipotent paternal figures to benevolent father figures who remain open to the potential that his crew have diverse perspectives and worthwhile perspectives. Second, captains have turned CRM into a generous gift that caring captains give to their crews. Third, CRM is positioned as a personal choice or preference rather than an industry mandated policy in response to the loss of human life. Fourth, CRM becomes the savvy man's approach to getting the most out of his subordinates. Captains that practice CRM are then repositioned as taking advantage of the kinder and gentler side of themselves (in the name of safety). Finally, participants tended to couch CRM as a mentoring responsibility, in much the same way that they were mentored prior to acceptance into the fraternity of captains. What is central to Ashcraft's analysis is the expectation that all crew members will enact the empowering model they have been shown while upholding the captain's manly authority.

In contrast to extant literature that has examined the expression of resistance through sabotage, Ashcraft implies the possibility that privileged voices can resist through professed consent. Pilots' resounding discursive compliance with CRM

mandates—and overt denial of any attempt at resistance—ironically resisted potential for egalitarian relations by reinforcing the agency and determination of pilots. It then stands to reason that resistance "shape-shifts" constantly, not because resistance is inherently multidimensional, but because it can be crafted for specific audiences.

Goodall and Trethewey (2007) argue that leadership scholars rely too often on essentialist conceptions that fail to recognize that leadership is part of a larger socially constructed "historicized discursive reality" (p. 458). Positing that,

> Theories of leadership provide a story that is largely ahistorical. Divorced from the social and cultural discourses that shaped them, disconnected from the political and economic realities that surrounded their making, and seemingly immaculate in their conception as ideas, these free-floating signifiers that we call theories of leadership are the bastard children of all that has been omitted from their lineage (p. 457).

The history of leadership, from this critical perspective, accurately reflects and reinforces the socially constructed lived experience of historians at least as much as any dispassionate or "objective" view of reality. Just as with historians, history is "rife with ruptures, discontinuities, multiple interpretations, and competing narratives engaged in hegemonic struggles" (p. 459). When engaged as historical, leadership is broadened to reflect the interrelationship between grand narratives and everyday organizing. Further, leadership is viewed in relation to ideological and dialectic struggles that mark the times. Goodall and Trethewey warn, "Our task must be to remain vigilant and not succumb to the temptation of 'simple is best' when it comes to explaining leadership" (p. 461).

1.9 In context: Feminist re-visioning of leadership and followership

Heidegger (1962) noted, "Thinking begins only when we have come to know that reason, glorified for centuries, is the stiff-necked adversary of thought" (p. 30). Feminist critical theorists seek to identify and challenge systems of power and privilege such as hierarchy, the roots of which go back some 4,000 years. All thought is inescapably located within and derived from a cultural context (Heidegger, 1962), including theological assumptions about the nature of the universe and our relation to it. In the West, a supreme deity is understood to work in concert with a series of transcendental beings that are more powerful than we are, and who essentially rule the earth and all that is located on it. This inevitably suggests the naturalness of hierarchy in social, political, and intellectual matters, which historically took the form of the Great Chain of Being (Wooton, 1986). Central to this notion of hierarchy is separation and difference, especially between leaders and followers. In the supposed hierarchy of knowledge, for example, scientific knowledge is taken to be superior to poetry as a means of representing and understanding the universe. The encouragement of separation and differential worth, especially prevalent in Christian theology, underpins a tendency to view the universe as an object upon which we can operate as if we are not a part of it, that we are—in biblical terms—given dominion over the beasts of the fields (The New International Version Bible Gen. 1:26). Yet hierarchy is primarily a theological concept, emerging from the Greek "hierarchia," or rule of a high priest. Hierarchy is imbued with a constraining but relatively untested assumption, evident in the work of Dixon and Westbrook (2003) that

no quantifiable evidence of a leadership/followership hierarchy existed in the organizations they studied.

In the process of human organizing, leadership and followership exist in a reciprocally defining communicative relationship. Both leadership and followership are created and reinforced constantly in intersubjective organizational meaning making. These identities are never wholly subjective or objective. They are created in an existential exchange addressing a specific need within an organization and its immediate requirements. As Lanigan (1988) asserts of this relationship, "The transcendental reduction led Husserl to formulate the theorem that subjectivity is intersubjectivity. Thus, Husserl deserves credit for the discovery of encounter or transaction as the fundamental unit of analysis in communication theory" (p. 30). From this communicative perspective one understands transactions or encounters to be the logical structure of human experience, whereby subjective understanding is always achieved intersubjectively. Deetz (1982) clarifies,

> The individual finds her/himself in a world which is in language and is already structured. The experience one has is already social...Language is central to this opening of world to experience. Self, other, and world retain their own particular autonomy, but an autonomy only understood in the context of unity. (p. 8)

The constructs of leadership and followership exist outside the confines of organizational positions of leaders and followers (Dixon & Westbrook, 2003; Collinson, 2005). This research opens the question of how leadership and followership may be considered more fruitfully by dismissing outdated theories and methods and applying a research

methodology better suited to investigating the lived human experience of organizational actors who are embodying leadership and followership.

1.10 Communication and leadership in organization

Leadership has always been something of an enigma for Western scholars (Bass, 1981; Grint, 2000; Kelvin, 1970; Stogdill, 1974). Despite many thousands of studies there are still no generally agreed upon definitions—in the Aristotelian sense—and the mountains of accumulated data and ideas seem to have brought us no nearer to a detailed understanding of what it means to *do* leadership. Stogdill's well known observation that there are almost as many definitions of leadership as there are people who have tried to define it has been echoed in cacophony (Bass, 1981; Cartwright & Zander, 1953; Gibb, 1969; Grint, 1997; Stogdill, 1974). These writers all indicate a level of frustration with the task oriented nature of leadership and the way that scholars tend to recapitulate the fundamental dichotomy between the task and maintenance function that has long been identified as an aspect of leadership (Bales, 1965).

Leader and leadership are constantly discussed as simply functions of the individual whom we call a leader and his or her position within a hierarchical structure. This is clearly because most scholars of leadership concern themselves with organizational contexts and the undeniable fact that, for the most part, these are hierarchically ordered. As a result, many of these command and control theories of leadership assume that leaders of importance are those appointed to position; that such people are essential to preserving order; that they are aligned with organizational imperatives; and that it is their job to align everyone else with these goals (Prince, 1998).

This understanding separates leaders and leadership from followers who are thus expected to be relatively passive (Collinson, 2005). Although the distinctions between position within a hierarchy and the doing of leadership was identified early in the history of leadership studies (Cartwright & Zander, 1953), many theorists and practitioners still treat labels of positions such as manager as if they are synonyms for leader (Beck & Yeager, 1994; Hunt, 1991; Northouse, 1997), conflating position and process conceptually in a very unwieldy way.

Our conceptions of leader and leadership are rooted within a cultural framework, or a culturally accepted episteme, that is theological in nature and based on the inevitability and desirability of hierarchy and control. Western social actors often presuppose a natural social order that must be imposed and maintained by leading from an objectively detached position if we are to avoid abject chaos, disorder, dissolution, and death. Further, we treat leadership as a noun, a reifiable object or something that can be dissected and examined in the same ways that a geologist might examine the various layers of a sedimentary rock, leading us to expect a set of procedures for examining such an object. As a result of our decidedly Western conceptualization, we understand that nouns produce independent sovereign objects within the environment and around which the environment bends itself. Thus the Western understanding of leadership is through the active and shaping control of a tangible interaction.

The dominant scientific traditions embody at their heart metaphysical assumptions that presuppose the naturalness of hierarchical order, and have an approach to existence rooted in intellectual frameworks of control, direction, and separation; nouns

are understood in terms of what they do, or what is done to or with them. Leadership is accorded a primacy and seen as fundamentally independent from and largely static relative to followership. This is not to say that Western thinkers are unfamiliar with the temporal nature of change, just that Western languages have a tendency to understand change as static and disparate (Prince, 2005). Leadership tends to be conceptualized as an object with inherent, albeit concealed meanings, which are to be analyzed according to specific and rigorous methods. These hypothetico/deductive scientific descriptions and explanations of leadership often fall into a subject/object dichotomy, and fail to address the processual and pluralistic nature of leadership. As Prince (2005) opines,

> ...[S]ome of our conceptual knots become easier if we accept at the outset that some of what we call leadership may actually be unique to a particular set of circumstances and events rather than something that may be generalized unproblematically to the world at large. (p. 110)

The linearity of Western language also tends to reinforce the assumption that objects of inquiry are somehow separable from the process of observation, an objectivist assumption that limits our ability to accurately conceptualize the leadership-followership phenomenon.

In order to do research which identifies and gives voice to powerful and powerless voices in the organization of study, a narrative approach must be used (Deetz, 2003). These stories of individual lived experience were solicited though the use of qualitative research interviews, and are a viable source of information upon which to base an inquiry into organizational culture. Qualitative narrative inquirers intend to

understand the meaning of lived experience including attitudes and beliefs. As well as exposing individual meaning, stories solicited in qualitative interviews tease out the symbolic forms through which organizational groups and members construct the shared meaning of their organizational realities. Stories, then, are a narrative sense making form that relates a sequence of events. Using individual stories, solicited through semi-structured interviews, allowed me as researcher and research tool to access the interpretations, meanings, and order that particular individuals place on their organizational identities. The intent of this research was to develop an understanding of how organizational members of all hierarchical levels create and re-create followership in one academic organization. Therefore, it was my goal to use human science research methods to produce a clearer understanding of the particular lived experiences of my co-researchers through a thematic analysis of the interviews.

This methodology is consistent with a pluralistic and diverse approach to organizational analysis. Rather than assuming that there is one reality as expressed by the singular and privileged organizational members, such as senior management, narratives derived from a variety of sources such as faculty, staff, and student perspectives provide an opportunity for me to see the inherent differences in how administrators, faculty, support staff, and students make sense of their experiences. These narratives allowed me to understand the intersubjective nature of organizational life based on the different personal experiences and sense making assumptions of oppressed as well as privileged organizational members.

From this interpretive perspective, organizational stakeholders can be understood as local experts who do not merely present facts or information. Rather, they provide insights in the emotional and symbolic appropriations and hence the meanings that organizational members arrive at based on events in their particular lived experience. Narratives echo the voice, thinking, and perceptions of organizational members and hence are a valuable basis to explore organizational culture. Further, Czarniawska (1998) points to the potential of a narrative research setting as a place that a researcher can come to understand contextual factors that might otherwise have been neglected. Narratives connect organizational members to social events and processes. These qualitative research methods enabled me to come to an understanding of the intersection of stakeholders and organization, placing the leadership-followership process in an informed emotional and organizational context.

Chapter 2:

Research Methodologies

"Perhaps we should set aside momentarily our cherished models and heroes of leadership altogether, and look again with fresh eyes attuned to experience, basking in the less structured but more congenial flow of existence."

(Peter Gronn, 2003, p. 288)

The use of qualitative studies of leadership and followership are relatively rare (Conger, 1998). They are time intensive and highly complex. It is this attention to complex interactions that makes the study of complex phenomena like leadership and followership so rich. Yet despite these advantages, the contribution of qualitative methods to leadership research remains remarkably limited: "It is a paradox given that qualitative research is, in reality, the methodology of choice for topics as contextually rich as leadership" (Conger, 1998, p. 107). Human science research must play an important role in leadership and followership literature, the primary reason being the extreme and enduing complexity of the leadership phenomenon itself. Specifically, leadership involves multiple levels of phenomena, possesses a dynamic character, and has a symbolic component. Quantitative methods, alone, are insufficient to investigate thoroughly a phenomenon with such characteristics. Surveys and questionnaires, the predominant method employed in quantitative research, tend to measure attitudes about behavior rather than actual observed behavior and are influenced by the social desirability concerns of respondents (Phillips, 1973). Quantitative analysis is also poor at measuring interaction—a critical element of the leadership-followership dynamic—and tends to be

uni-directional in design (Erhart & Klein, 2001). Survey generated followership descriptors fail to help us understand the deeper structures of the leadership-followership phenomenon. We trade off the "how" and "why" questions about leadership for highly abstract concepts and descriptions which allow us to only generalize across a range of contexts at relatively superficial levels (Pettigrew, 1990). They are like book covers which highlight in their titles an important discovery, yet are missing the explanatory chapters within. It is for these reasons, and more, that this study employed the use of qualitative/human science methods, in interrogating the nebulous, enigmatic, incongruous, and paradoxical nature of the leadership-followership phenomenon.

Ashcraft and Mumby (2004) forward both a methodology and theory for examining seemingly hegemonic processes such as leadership within organizations. This feminist communicology takes into account the critical sensibilities of feminist scholars with human science and qualitative research methods, such as open ended interviews. Drawing on the recent production of organizational communication scholarship, Ashcraft and Mumby propose an inclusive framework for studying gender in organizations. An argument is offered in response to Martin and Collinson's (2002) call for an integrated and improvisational field for addressing gender in organizations. They articulate guiding principles of their award winning book, *Reworking Gender: A Feminist Communicology of Gender* in an attempt to illuminate the discipline of gendered organizational communication.

Building on Joanne Martin's (1992) metaphor of an "organizational nexus" which provides a discursive model that directly contradicts traditional container metaphors of

organizing, Mumby and Ashcraft (2006) advocate for their theory as a "nexus for gendered organizational research" (p. 74). This discourse-based model offers six thematic principles for a feminist communicology of organization: subjectivity is fragmented, unstable, and constructed in communication; power and resistance exist dialectically and are mutually defining; cultural history of organizing is paramount to understanding; discourse and the material world are a dialectic in that discourse constructs material realities which influence discursive possibilities; gender is co-constructed and best understood dialectically; and ethical research requires attention to exposing the consequences of gendered organization and the possibility of organizing differently.

This framework proposes that communication is a means of understanding the construction of gendered identity and relationships, calling on Weedon's (1987) model of process subjectivity, which defines identity as stable and precarious, coherent and contradictory. Central to this construction is the lack of centrality of these conditions; together, coherence and contradiction function in a dialectic tension which is negotiated socially within the context of organizational norms. Much of the extant organizational research focuses on domination and control, or resistance and liberation, failing to take into consideration the gendered nature of organizational narratives. Communication scholars have addressed this void in examining discourse not simply as text, but rather as dynamic, embodied in communicative acts that shape organizational sense-making and relations of power. Langellier (1989) recommends that this type of narrative is defined as political praxis. When viewed as praxis, narratives are viewed from a hermeneutic

perspective that understands communication as more than fixed texts, but something that we DO in day-to-day interaction. These communicative acts are reified into systems of power and privilege that empower masculine gendered identities within organizations, and marginalize feminine gendered identities. In situating analyses historically, Ashcraft and Mumby demonstrate the ways that gender and work are subject to contradictory and paradoxical social forces; discourse arises out of ongoing political struggle among organizational stakeholders in competition with other established discourses. A communicology perspective recognizes reality as socially constructed in a world with enduring social and material systems of communication that exist prior to individual cognition. Organizational stakeholders produce gendered realities that are sedimented and reified over time, reflecting the ability of the powerful to synchronize gendered realities with personal ambitions. Masculinities and femininities are co-constructed as they are formulated in relation to each other and discourses like race, class, and sexuality. Gendered realities, then, are constructed in the larger context of power relations. The production of masculinity and femininity are interdependent, in that gendered organizational realities are ongoing, congruous, and dialectic processes. This research uses Ashcraft and Mumby's work as the guiding theory/methodology, combined with narrative methodologies to solicit the lived human experience of co-researchers and interrogate the oppressive and repressive structures that help to inform their perspectives.

2.1 Research contexture/epistemology

In the contemporary scientific community, epistemology is defined as "the search for methods and foundations that enable us to be assured of the truth of our beliefs"

(Polkinghorne, 1983, p. 10). Crotty (1998) defines epistemology as "how we know what we know," and is "concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible" (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). This research is centered in the epistemology of constructionism, which rejects the notion of objective truth and sees meaning as constructed though interaction with others (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). Constructionist researchers attempt to understand particular lived experience. According to this epistemology, meaning is created and maintained in human interaction, and nothing has been made meaningful until it has been consciously interpreted as such. As Macquarrie (1973) writes,

> What kind of world is there before conscious beings engage with it? Not an intelligible world, many would want to say. Not a world of meaning. It becomes a world of meaning only when meaning-making beings make sense of it. (p. 57)

It is not only possible, but accepted and assumed that "different people may construct different meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon" (Crotty, 1998, p. 9). This approach is the most commonly employed epistemology in human science research (Crotty, 1998, p. 9).

2.2 Theoretical perspective

A theoretical perspective is an approach to understanding and expressing social and human realities (Crotty, 1998). As such, it implies a philosophical stance that informs the methodology and provides a context for the research process. In explicitly stating her theoretical perspective, the researcher outlines the assumptions she brings to the endeavor. The major theoretical perspective that seems particularly salient to this

study is critical theory. Critical theory calls into question ideological assumptions and initiates action-in-the-spirit of social justice. In this inquiry, "researchers find themselves interrogating commonly held values and assumptions, challenging conventional social structures, and engaging in social action" (Crotty, 1998, p. 157). Critical theorists understand research to be one step in the process of liberation from oppression, asking researchers to present pragmatic solutions to oppressive conditions—or what Freire (1972) described as "armchair revolution."

Critical theory has both a narrow and broad meaning in philosophy and in the history of social science. In a narrow sense, critical theory designates several generations of German philosophers and social theorists in the Western European Marxist tradition known as the Frankfurt School. According to these theorists, a critical theory may be distinguished from a traditional theory according to a specific practical purpose: a theory is critical to the extent that it seeks human emancipation, "to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them" (Crotty, 1998, p. 131). In the broader sense, critical theory aims to explain and transform practices and institutions that oppress human beings, interwoven with social movements that oppose varied dimensions of the domination of human beings in modern societies. In both the broad and the narrow senses, critical theory provides the descriptive and normative bases for social inquiry aimed at decreasing domination and increasing freedom in all its guises.

Although diffuse and incongruent, the critical tradition routinely interrogates social and cultural arrangements that reinforce the power of certain societal stakeholders in ways that dominate and oppress others. Critical theorists examine the ways in which

power imbalance, hegemony, and domination are constructed in social interaction, and envision alternative possibilities that are humanizing and pluralistic in orientation. Only by becoming aware of the dialectic of opposing forces, in a struggle for power, can individuals be liberated and free to change the existing order. From this theoretical perspective, contradiction, tension, and conflict are inevitable aspects of the social order and can never be eliminated.

Contemporary textbooks and scholarly articles tend to categorize critical theory as modern, postmodern, post-structural, and post-colonial (Littlejohn & Foss, 2005; Collinson 2005). Given the diversity of perspectives in contemporary critical research, the task of establishing a unifying critical theory seems unlikely. Crotty (1998) has attempted to demystify critical theory in shifting the question to one of epistemology. This framework positions postmodern, post-structural, and post-colonial research as theoretical perspectives informed by the epistemology of subjectivism: "In subjectivism, meaning comes from anything but an interaction between the subject and the object to which it is ascribed" (Crotty, 1998, p. 9). However, Crotty does not epistemologically imbed critical theory within a subjectivist paradigm. Rather, critical theory attempts to reconcile both sides of the traditional opposition between explanatory and interpretive approaches to normative claims. On the one hand, it affirms the need for general theories, while troubling strong positivistic truth claims. On the other hand, critical inquirers are positioned within the pragmatic situation of communication, seeing the critic as making a strong claim for the truth of her critical analysis. Theories are seen as interpretations that are validated by the extent to which they open up new possibilities of

action that are themselves to be verified in democratic inquiry. Research participants are understood to be knowledgeable social agents who reflect a lived human experience which can be solicited through narrative; these reflections of a specific lived experience are then interrogated for the oppressive social structures that have helped to inform those realities. From this research perspective, it is possible to approach critical theory from subjectivist, or constructionist epistemologies in doing research, for all subjective knowledge is arrived at intersubjectively (Deetz, 1982).

2.3 Research contexture

In order to meet this study's goal of gaining greater understanding of the human lived experience of leadership and followership is U.S. organizations, I decided to solicit co-researchers' stories. At the most basic level, interviews are conversations (Kvale, 1996). Kvale defines qualitative research interviews as attempts to understand the world from the co-researchers' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences. In the context of this research, I make no claims to objectivity and, in fact, attempt to come to an intersubjective understanding with the research participants of the phenomenon being studied. Thus, I view the participants in the study as co-researchers, "not subjects," for they help to create the rich contextual stories that are the lifeblood of human science research. Interviews for research differ in some important ways from other familiar kinds of interviews or conversations. Unlike conversations in daily life, which are usually reciprocal exchanges, conversational research interviews involve an interviewer who is in charge of structuring and directing the questioning. In many cases this creates an asymmetrical sharing of power whereby the researcher's power is much greater than that

of the co-researcher. While interviews for research may also promote understanding and change, the emphasis is on intellectual understanding rather than on producing personal change in the co-researcher.

The imbalance of power in the conversational interview must give the researcher pause. For with greater power comes greater responsibility. This type of research requires a particular knowledge and craft that the researcher must use in creating open-ended questions. Co-researchers provide knowledge perspectives from their experience of the phenomenon of study. The researcher listens and critically analyzes the conversation for themes and recurrence of unique, or natural, language. The researcher listens and follows up with questions and seeks "answers to questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 8).

No two co-researchers have the same experience; however, through the process of sharing their stories the co-researchers gain self-awareness and a better understanding of their lived experience. Bulow states that narrative is a way of "sharing experiences as the means of developing experiential knowledge and for creating meaning" (2004, p. 36). The method of conversational interviewing is appropriate for this study in that the goal of this study is to understand a particular lived experience from the voices of those who have a lived meaning of that experience.

2.4 Research criteria

My intention for this research was to solicit and interrogate the ways that organizational stakeholders in the U.S. have come to understand the communicative process of leadership and followership. To that end, I did not exclude co-researchers on

the basis of my perceptions of their race, class, gender, or ethnicity. I used a combination of purposive and snowball sampling in selecting participants. Both are useful methods of sample selection when a specialized population, such as persons occupying leadership positions within organizations, is sought.

2.5 Sample size

A common misconception about sampling in qualitative research is that numbers are unimportant in ensuring the adequacy of a sampling strategy. Sample sizes may be too small to support claims of having achieved either informational redundancy or theoretical saturation, or too large to permit the deep, case-oriented analysis that is the raison-d'être of qualitative inquiry. Determining adequate sample size in qualitative research is ultimately a matter of judgment and experience in evaluating the quality of the information collected against the uses to which it will be put, the particular research method and purposeful sampling strategy employed, and the research product intended (Morse, 2000; Sobal, 2001). However, the ambiguous nature of such claims provides room for skepticism and derision, especially among positivistic researchers. To clarify, Kvale (1996) claims that a sample size of fifteen plus-or-minus ten is an appropriate sample size in qualitative research (p. 102). For the purposes of this research, I chose to interview six co-researchers.

2.6 Co-researchers

Prior to initial contact with my co-researchers, I applied for and received exempt status through the University of Alaska Fairbanks Institutional Review Board. Upon prospectus approval from my committee, I began to make contact with potential co-

researchers. During my initial interaction, I briefly explained that I was conducting research concerned with the communication of followership at the research site. I then informed prospective co-researchers about qualitative research and narrative methodology which necessitates interviews that seek out specific lived experiences; I asked if they would participate in my study and consent to a conversational interview. Upon agreeing, I explained that the interview would last somewhere between 45 minutes and one hour, but that I was not adhering to a rigid time limit. There was no reason to conceal information about this study or its design, so such information was available to the co-researchers at their request. Before the interview my co-researchers were made aware that our conversations would be audio-recorded, their identities would be kept confidential, research transcriptions and notes would be kept in a secure location, and their participation was completely voluntary. Each participant signed an Informed Consent Form and consented on tape before the interview began.

In the selection of co-researchers, I considered a range of demographic possibilities, i.e., age, ethnicity, gender, occupation, etc. The unifying quality among all participants was a self-identification as a leader or follower. All participants worked at the same medium size research university in the northwest region of the United States, employing some 1,400 persons. The research site serves a community of 100,000 and is responsible for educating the community and producing scientific research. Four distinct hierarchical levels exist in this organization: administration, faculty, support staff, and students. Research participants worked at the research site for more than 3 years and

possessed an in-depth understanding of what it means to be a "leader" or "follower" at said institution.

Co-researchers were interviewed in a conference room, which provided privacy, confidentiality, and a location for recording the interview for later transcription, or at the location of their choosing. At the most basic level, interviews are conversations (Kvale, 1996). Kvale defines qualitative research interviews as "attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view, to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations" (p. 29). Interviews for this research differ in some important ways from other familiar kinds of interviews or conversations. Unlike conversations in daily life, which are usually reciprocal exchanges, qualitative interviews involve an interviewer who is in charge of structuring and directing the questioning. While interviews for research purposes may also promote understanding and change, the emphasis is on intellectual understanding rather than on producing personal change (Kvale, 1996).

In these qualitative interviews, open-ended responses to questions provided me with quotations, which are the main source of raw data. Patton (1987) notes that quotations "reveal the respondents' levels of emotion, the way in which they have organized the world, their thoughts about what is happening, their experiences, and their basic perceptions" (p. 80). The task for the qualitative evaluator is to provide a framework within which people can respond in a way that represents accurately and thoroughly their point of view.

2.7 Narrative methodology

A research methodology "is the research design that shapes our choice and use of particular methods and links them to the desired outcomes" (Crotty, 1998, p. 7). The methodology establishes the framework for the researcher so that one can determine "how to frame a problem in such a way that it can be investigated using particular designs and procedures," and "how to select and develop appropriate means for generating data" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 161) This study employs narrative inquiry as "the best way of representing and understanding experience...In this way narrative is both the phenomenon and the method of social sciences" (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. 18).

Narrative is the fundamental method for linking lived human experience to expression. It highlights the significance that actions have for one another and can be seen as a form of meaning making. It is complex and expresses itself in bringing together descriptions of experience into a particular style of discourse. This consolidating of descriptions is non-summative and makes opaque relationships among realities that were once transparent. Narrative expresses its work as a bringing together of spoken and written interaction as a text of the human experience. It displays the meaningfulness of individual events in human experience. One's actions, the actions of others, and happen-stance appear as meaningful contributions to the human experience.

This narrative scheme serves as the lens through which the apparently independent and disconnected parts of reality are seen as interrelated parts of a unified whole. At the singular level of life, the autobiographical narrative illustrates life as unified and whole. In stories about other lives and in histories of social groups, narrative

shows the interconnected nature of what previously was considered random circumstance. The imaginative creation of fictions are either passed on through ritualized storytelling, or as modern-day artistic creations. Narrative displays the multitude of methods in which lived human experience can be brought together as a "unified adventure" (Polkinghorne, 1988).

Narrative is an extension of the interpretive contexture of human science (Kvale, 1996) and lends itself to inductive qualitative inquiry (Babbie, 1989, p. 52) in that it captures the rich meanings nested within lived human experience. Quantitative analyses of behavior are insufficient to capture the complexity of meaning embodied within narratives. Traditional scientific theory adopts a rational approach to achieve an objective description of forces at work in the world, and positions itself outside the realm of study to objectively observe human interaction. In this way traditional methods of science fall within a positivist notion, dealing with random samples and statistical analyses. In contrast, using narrative methodologies, people create order and construct texts within particular cultural and historical contexts. Narrative methodologies take the lived human experience itself as the object of study. Thus the focus is on how individuals or groups make sense of events and actions in their lives through examining culturally informed ways of knowing.

Organizations can be understood as socially constructed symbolic systems—stories, discourses, and texts (Hazen, 1993). Each member of the organization has a voice in the narrative. Some voices are perceived to be loud, articulate, and powerful, while others are silent or unheard. The differences and possibilities are exposed when we

conceive of organizations as simultaneously occurring dialogues with each voice being the center of his or her own organization. This understanding of organization rejects the container metaphor of organization as the building in which persons work. This notion fails to take into account that organizing is a performance, not an end point (Parker, 1997). These ways of organizing are often communicated as narratives, a means by which organization is communicated and performed. Different narratives coexist and interact within an organizational setting, and reveals social norms of interaction for the organization and its members. Each offers a different strategy for performing organizational arrangements, generating particular structures and resistances. Organization, then, can be viewed as multiple narratives that operate to generate complex social and material realities (Dunford & Jones, 2000). This view stands in direct opposition of traditional understandings of organizational culture as little more than structure and function.

These entries show how narrative can be used to gain insight into organizations and organizational culture. Communication scholars, anthropologists, sociologists, and others define culture in diverse ways. Most definitions involve a combination of language use, symbols, rituals, norms, values, and standards that are understood and used by all cultural members. In discussing the cultural construct in organizations, Deetz et al., (2000) assert that culture is not something that an organization has, rather culture is what an organization is. Culture is often implicit, transparent, and deeply imbedded in organizational reality, and therefore is both powerful and challenging to identify. This integrated view of culture (Deetz et al., 2000) is constituted of internal and external

values and behaviors; culture exists in a dialectic tension wherein values affect behavior and behavior affects values. From this socially constructed perspective, culture is a set of loosely held symbols which are constructed and maintained by a series of attitudes, ideologies, behaviors, and language that influence culture and are generated from within and outside of the organization. On the basis of these dominant communication structures, organizational members make sense of shared and unshared values, beliefs, and assumptions.

The organizational culture perspective involves an understanding of organizations as constituted in communication between members. Scholars using this perspective focus on the complex environments that inform and are informed by organizational members' "talk." The social construction of reality perspective is the foundation of this understanding. For social constructionists all meaningful reality is socially constructed through narrative (Crotty, 1998).

2.8 Qualitative interviewing

Qualitative research is most often characterized as a simultaneous process wherein stages of data collection, description, and analysis are continuously informed and informing of each other; they are holistically conceived and reflexively interwoven (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). The formal part of my data description and analysis was entirely focused on achieving knowledge of a particular phenomenon. After each interview I recorded my reactions and thoughts, on both content and process of the interviews, in my field notes. In particular, I noted non-verbal communication behaviors that appeared as important context to the verbal interactions. The combination of my

field notes with transcriptions of the interviews produced the data that was analyzed for emergent themes.

The thematic analysis of the transcribed and recorded data began with an analysis, which Maxwell (1998) describes as, "attempts to understand the data...in context" (p. 90). In looking toward an understanding of how co-researchers come to understand leadership and followership, I viewed their comments first in the context in which they were spoken, and secondly in a literal word usage sense. If a co-researcher made a comment about what leadership is while getting a cup of coffee versus in response to a question in an interview setting, those contexts were taken into account as I moved toward understanding the "coherent whole" (Maxwell, 1998, p. 90). Secondly, narratives were solicited and interrogated for dialectic relationships that might help to provide further insight.

By using both thematic analysis and feminist critique, this study avoids the "risk of missing important insights" (Maxwell, 1998, p. 90). This dual analysis provided room to examine the constellation of seemingly transparent gendered institutional forces that help organizational members come to understand leadership and followership at the research site in question. The dialectic relationships of gender, control, and resistance (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004) contributed to an understanding that allowed me to analytically transcend one individual interview, co-producing crystallized themes that emerged from the layers of data (Kvale, 1996). The co-production of themes—between researcher and co-researchers—produced a holistic understanding of how gender, control, and resistance shape-shift in the production of leadership and followership.

Chapter 3

Narrative Perspectives

"But Inconsistency occurs in the writings of all great men—

the present, of course, always excepted."

(Sarah Hoyt, 1912, p. 128)

"The research interview is a specific form of conversation" (Kvale, 1996, p. 19), whereby the researcher and co-researcher co-construct distinct meanings from lived experience. In this study, new meanings of leadership and followership at a medium-sized research institution were constructed. Central to the qualitative interview is a focus on the co-construction of knowledge of the particular since "interview data are never simply raw but are both situated and textual" (Silverman, 2001, p. 288). These narratives "stress the socially constructed nature, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 8). Being a feminist critical researcher, I am continuously aware that the production of knowledge is an act of power (Gergen, 1988). In combating patriarchal notions of knowledge production, my co-researchers and I are viewed as equal partners in the co-construction of knowledge. Feminist qualitative interviews reflect the interpretivist commitment to collaborative and inductive research that preserves situated accounts of human experience, while focusing on the oppressive and patriarchal constructions that oppress women. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) suggest, "Mobilized for these purposes, [feminist] qualitative research can identify the sources of oppressive

communication, clarify its complex dynamics, and increase participants' options for change" (p. 57). Crotty (1998) clarifies,

> ...[C]riticalists cannot share the unalloyed confidence interpretivists tend to place in accounts of experience turned up by their research. Where most interpretivists today embrace such accounts as descriptions of authentic 'lived experience', critical researchers hear in them the voice of an inherited tradition and a prevailing culture. (p. 58)

Culture is not a realm apart from the give-and-take of everyday society but mirrors its contradictions and oppressions. In presuming that social life is saturated with irony, paradox, absurdity, and cruelty, feminist theorists seek to expose and awaken rather than merely describe. These interviews seek out the ways that organizational stakeholders conceptualize and oppose patriarchal concepts like leadership and followership; in their own natural language, my co-researchers told narratives of their lived experiences. It is this political practice that framed each one of the conversational interviews in this study.

During the course of each interview, I found myself and my co-researchers constructing new meaning for our experiences. The narratives of my co-researchers were reflective of the ironic, ambiguous, and contradictory character of organizational life (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004); their narratives were fraught with contradictions, including admissions of dishonesty mixed with sincere, forthright, and candid descriptions of their understandings of leadership and followership. We make sense of our experiences, our reality, through stories, myths, and legends; thus, seemingly ironic and contradictory

narratives are the essence of communication and critical human science research (Putnam et al., 1993). Each interview provided revelations regarding leader-follower experiences for both myself and my co-researchers, and helped us all to constitute new, rich, and complex understandings of our lived experience. During each interview both the researcher and co-researchers saw "new meanings in what they experience and do" (Kvale, 1996, p. 189).

I am at once the researcher and the research tool; at once subject and object of my research and therefore obligated to provide consumers of my research an understanding of my reflexive research process. I came into the research with a strong sense of skepticism as to the voracity of claims about the role of leadership and followership in organizations. An extensive review of scholarly literature indicated that much of this research pays attention to leadership as central to the process of organizing, while failing to recognize the strong but ubiquitous role of followership within the same organizations. Lest the results of this research be obviated by my politics, I sought out the narratives of organizational actors at all hierarchical levels in hopes of coming to a pluralistic and relational understanding of the role of followership. The relational familiarity in each interview varied from adoration and friendship, to never having before met my co-researcher. I was surprised by the level of detail and candor that surfaced during the course of the research interviews. A defining aspect of the interview experience for both myself and my co-researchers was the cathartic and therapeutic feelings that were generated. During each interview I felt sincere empathy and frustration for and with my co-researchers. I feel very strongly that these interviews validated our

understandings of followership because of the relational and pluralistic methods that we used in the process of co-construction. For as Kvale (1996) states,

> In an interview inquiry intersubjective knowledge is constructed in a conversation between the researcher and the 'objects' investigated. With the 'objects'—the interview subjects—giving voice to their understanding of an interpersonally negotiated social world, the qualitative research interview obtains a privileged position for creating objective knowledge of a conversational world. (p. 298)

3.1 Follower looking for a cause

Alicia's Interview

Alicia is a personal friend I have known for eight years, and with whom I worked for five years. I have been shocked and astonished to hear her stories of struggles as a follower for as many years as I have known her. On the day of the interview, Alicia arrived and gave me a 10,000-watt smile that she later informed me disguised the turmoil that imbued her organizational reality. Alicia is a 52 year old white woman and self-confessed "single, white, female" from the urban northeast who has been in her current occupational position for nearly twelve years. She generates monies for a non-profit organization associated with the research site under study. She works in a small organization, with three middle managers, and one chief executive officer. In describing her job she states, "All this is to say that I make friends and ask them for money on behalf" of the organization for which she works. This woman exudes sincere enthusiasm and often tries to involve me and others in some particular cause related to social activism. Alicia is an unabashed follower and is currently embroiled in a power struggle

with her current supervisor, so I began by asking how she understands followership in her current job.

After pausing for a few moments, she shifts in her chair and leans forward putting her arms on the table, and begins to articulate her understandings of followership. Alicia tells me that, "in the context of my job I think the concept of followership has to do with structure and hierarchy within the department and that goes from supervisor to supervisor to supervisor. The department is a top down organization." She further clarifies, "…but I think there is also probably a subtextual idea of followership and leadership in my department and that has to do with…" She sits up in her chair and crosses her arms while looking up to the ceiling and rapidly rolls her eyes. This continues for five seconds until she states, "I think who has a broader understanding of the department and its goals and the things that it wants to achieve and who speaks to those goals and speaks to the bigger picture."

I ask Alicia if she has a better understanding of followership outside of the context of her organizational life. "… [M]y general concept of followership is someone who is looking for another person whose ideas are attractive, worth pursuing, supporting, and working towards." Drawing on previous knowledge, I ask if she sees herself as a leader or follower: "I would consider myself primarily a follower." She pauses and puts her hand up to her mouth, closes her eyes, and says, "Very often leadership is just a matter of saying 'gee I see that this needs to be done and I can do it; I think that I will,' and there are times that I feel that role too." She gestures towards her body and indicates that she enjoys the challenges of working towards a common goal in a shared experience.

My interest is piqued by the satisfaction she experiences working within groups, so I ask how she recognizes who is leading and following in those group interactions. "I think it comes down to communication skills. In any group there will come a voice that is able to pin point an idea and express it." When that happens, she asserts, others will recognize the clarity of vision and begin to follow her/his lead.

I sense a broader theoretical conceptualization that excites me, and ask an ethereal and nearly incomprehensible question that seems to cause Alicia great consternation. I suspected this sort of thing would happen in my first qualitative interview, but I am appalled by my gaff and quickly ask a question about leadership in staff meetings. Alicia smiles and pats my hand assuredly, in response to my flushed cheeks, and says "…on occasion I must confess I am probably not a follower." She and I both laugh for a second and she asserts that she is concerned by the broader implications of decisions reached at staff meetings, and in situations where broader implications are not taken into account she will "stray from her follower role." What is the response to that change in roles, I ask. "I have found when it threatens the management perspective there's a certain amount of punishment. It's certainly subtextual, but present, and it means we are not as productive as we would wish." We continue to talk for several minutes about the subtexual nature of this punishment until she admits, "It's really not that subtle. I'll be more honest." She laughs, sits up, uncrosses her arms, frowns, and bemoans, "…there's one thing that I've had to do as long as I've been at [current organization]. Through both administrations, I've learned to separate the mission from the missionaries." She sits back in her chair and states that she has a tremendous amount of social capital in the

community based on her work. "So, the failings of an administration...are far less important to me than the big picture, which is that I work at a great place in a great community." I continue to press her about the ways she is censored for failing to use the language of management. Alicia indicates that the atmosphere is worse than it has ever been in her nearly twelve years of service, "It's pretty dark these days." She looks up, smiles, and asserts that at the staff level the problems are well known, "which certainly relieves a lot of tension." The camaraderie among the staff at the research site helps her to get through the days. Alicia indicates that there is an us versus them mentality among the staff, and on many days the shared circumstance among staff members allows for levity as a saving grace. Ironically, her direct supervisor attempts to censor Alicia for speaking out of turn by using non-specific hearsay. Her supervisor indicates that there are constant complaints about Alicia's "assertive style" of followership. Alicia scoffs, "It's not true!" Her tone changes, she crosses her arms, and then her legs. "I am really confident in my relationships within and outside of the [research site]. My work bears me out and my success bears me out." Alicia is referring to a recent study that indicates she is the best at what she does in the entire country. "I couldn't have the relationships that I do if those problems existed. So yeah, it does hurt and it's a problem for all of us." Rather sheepishly she quips, "But, at least it's an identified problem."

Based on the tone of Alicia's voice and lack of eye contact I make a strategic decision to approach the topic from the experience of a new employee at the research site, asking for advice regarding how to identify the leaders and followers. "I think it's easy," Alicia retorts, "look around the room and see who's dressed differently and who is

reacting differently than the rest of the crowd." Alicia pauses for a moment and says, "Listen for the sound of clicking heels on the linoleum floors. Management are the only ones that wear wooden heels; the rest of us wear comfortable shoes." It's little things like dress shoes and pant suits that seem to separate management from staff in the organization. Alicia further clarifies, "I'd say there is a real chasm between staff and management." She goes on to assert that the chasm gets wider the further up the hierarchy one goes:

> They have no way of knowing that our culture has changed and that what is being put forth by Francis [Alicia's direct supervisor, second in command] is anything other than the one true path. I know that she does not always tell the truth. I know that she uses numbers to create a story that is not necessarily accurate.

Alicia's supervisor, Francis, seems to have the complete support of her supervisor, Fred, the chief executive officer. Alicia asserts that the chief executive is seen by staff as a "puppet" for Francis. This is evidenced by his exclusion from the staff; most messages are filtered through Francis, and his adoption of language used by Francis: "I see the leader of our organization as [Francis]. It's her words I hear coming out of his [Fred's] mouth so she must be the leader." Far from a visionary archetypal leader, Fred is seen as a passive yet dutiful follower of Francis' vision for the organization. Alicia expresses great surprise and frustration that Fred has become so passive, and says this behavior is contrary to Fred's first year as chief executive of the organization: "You know when he first started I saw him as having real potential as a leader because he took action." Not

only did Fred take action, he addressed problematic hires that had plagued the organization for years:

> Fred came in and managed to get rid of people each in a different way but, always quickly. That was quite impressive really. His actions conveyed a sense of leadership even though it was a hideous thing to watch.

Alicia says she worked closely with Fred in his first year because her previous supervisor had been fired and a new replacement had yet to be hired. During that time Fred would seek the advice of staff members prior to making major decisions. In cases when he and staff members disagreed on a course of action Fred would defer to their judgment. Alicia recounts one example, "I presented an alternative position to Fred and he said go make it work. I did and it was successful. Fred came to me afterward, shook my hand, and said, 'congratulations you were right'. It was huge for me…it was huge enough that five years later I still remember it…. I don't see that out of Fred anymore." Alicia sits back in her chair, her eyes well up with tears, she shifts in her chair, crosses her arms, and clears her throat.

After the first year when Fred hired Francis to be Alicia' supervisor, she says the discourse has become less inclusive, and focused on potential failure rather than potential success. Alicia asserts solemnly,

> I find it [lack of leadership] quite disappointing and I no longer see Fred as a leader. I don't see Fred so he's not my leader. I don't hear Fred uttering original thoughts so he's not my leader. Instead of considering creative solutions to problems, he cuts bait and so he's not my leader….

Alicia reports that Fred and Francis frequently present a unitary vision of the future and tolerate no discussion, dissent, or digression from the vision. Alicia stresses Francis' role in these dictatorial policies, "anybody who says anything different from her worldview will be shot down, and I have seen it in meetings. She is a very strong presence." I ask if Francis is a good follower. Alicia quite seriously asserts, "I don't see her as a follower because she doesn't embody the principles of the organization, except in a rote sort of way." I ask if Francis has problems with authenticity among the staff. Alicia indicates that Francis knows the names of programs that they produce for public consumption but will often not know anything about the content of the show, to which Alicia opines, "She doesn't use the medium that she supports. I'd have to say it bothers me quite a bit." Research in the field of leadership indicates that relational authenticity is central to commanding respect in organizations (Eagly, 2005). When I asked about Francis' leadership style Alicia retorts, "Her leadership style is dictatorial. I don't think she's a good leader because she is detached from the principles that guide the organization. She is a poor leader because she is easily threatened, obviously she is threatened by me…by my success." Alicia expresses regret that the two don't have a better working relationship and attributes that to Francis' inability to fluidly transition between the role of leader and follower. "She's not a follower at all. She's competitive and has no willingness to embrace the real culture of the organization. For instance, her attempts to change the culture of the organization indicate that she's a leader, but not a good one." Alicia looks down and shakes her head in disgust, "We can be a follower of a cause, and we can be a leader at the same time." She sighs and leans forward, "I suppose

in many ways I have been a leader, but I won't know the extent of my leadership until I leave." I ask how she demonstrates leadership and followership. "I think it goes back to separating the mission from the missionaries. I'm really fervent about the organization and the mission." Alicia sums up the interview in defining the doing of leadership and followership saying,

> I don't care if I get credit for the idea. I just want to see the ideas pursued and implemented. A lot of times if I have to do something outside of my job description [to further the mission of the organization] I'll do it because first, it's fun for me and second, I get a good feeling from seeing it get done.

Alicia is a friend of mine and I hate having to see her go through this horrific process. However, in subsequent conversations she indicates that our interview proved to be therapeutic for her. This brightens my spirits, but also reaffirms my commitment to finding someone that understands the leadership-followership dynamic at the research site—I need to talk to an expert.

3.2 The practitioner

Abby's Interview

I met Abby at the research site through a mutual friend. She has a commanding presence and a no-nonsense kind of attitude that enables her to be a very successful consultant. We agreed to meet at a local coffee shop for our interview. The coffee shop is small and sparsely lit, with blonde hardwood floors, and was almost empty when I arrived prior to the interview. I found the most secluded corner available being careful to avoid the speakers overhead and the large picture window that faced the street.

Shortly after Abby arrives, I learn that one of her children is not feeling well. I suggest that we can reschedule the interview; she declines, and indicates that her schedule over the next month is so hectic that she may not be able to reschedule. I decide to press on and hand her a letter of informed consent. She asks a couple of questions about the ways that her interview will be used, then signs. I make a joke about the difficulty of remembering to bring a pen that isn't pink or purple for the Letter of Informed Consent. She remarks on my love of pink—we both laugh—and then discuss my pink prescription eye glasses some more before moving on to the interview.

I ask Abby to extol the virtues of leadership at the research site. She asks if I want to know what leadership is, or what leadership should be. "Both," I say. She indicates that leadership is most often conflated with directing, mentoring, and role modeling. She clarifies, "People want to know what's going on, what their role is, and hopefully have someone who is modeling what they want them to be doing work wise." I interrogate, "How does that differ from what you think leadership *should* be?" She takes a sip of her coffee and says, "Leadership at the [research site] should be making sure that…there is more accountability, clear expectations, mentoring, and ultimately holding [followers] accountable positively and negatively based on their results." She sits back and crosses her arms and I inquire as to the role of hierarchy in leadership:

> I've got to tell you that the hierarchy thing is an excuse not to be empowered. It's an excuse, but it's a justifiable excuse. They [front line workers] definitely don't give themselves enough credit for creating the kind of place that they want to work in. We don't have to wait for those on high to get it right.

She leans back in her chair and looks over at a group of people ordering coffee at the front counter. While she takes a breath, I ask about the role of followers in organizations. She opens her mouth and makes an indecipherable sound, looks toward the ceiling, and says,

> I think we all have to be followers at some level, so followership is being able to get around [buy into] a mission and do what is necessary to achieve [the mission] so that we can serve more people with the resources and not being the opposite...[that is] the person that is looking to climb the ladder and looking for status.

I nod my head, and query her as to the role of followership in hierarchical organizations. She indicates that much of what I am calling followership is represented in personal or servant models of leadership (Greenleaf, 1977):

> In every position [in an organization] leadership is involved. Personal leadership is doing the right thing, going in the right direction, and serving my community. So, I think [you're talking about] personal leadership. We are all leaders in our field but we tend to think of position or a [specific] person that people go to [when we think of leaders]. I've seen so many people that are leaders in their field that aren't [recognized] hierarchical leaders.

Abby indicates that she is a "research junky;" I recognize a point of affinity and tell her about Dixon and Westbrook's (2003) research that indicates the best leaders are also great followers. To which she replies,

> You know a lot of this can be thought of like stewardship. If a leader is doing a good job they are listening to people and they are willing to listen to those that have the expertise to guide them. So in a way that is followership. I could see good followers moving up the hierarchical ladder.

Abby and I then talk about the dysfunctional ways that the research site is being run. She indicates that she is unlikely to give money—as an alumnus—until a comprehensive vision for the future of the research site is articulated. We then talk about the problems of authenticity that the current administration has in relating to faculty, staff, students, and the alumni. Abby rolls her eyes, turns her palms toward the ceiling, and admits that she has just spent the day with some of the research site's upper level managers. I ask her, "What are the different ways that you coach a 35 year old white man and a 50 year old black woman?" She replies,

> No. I wouldn't coach them differently. The only difference for me is if they have ego or not. No I guess I don't [coach different people differently]. For me it's about ego and their ability to listen to criticism…so I guess ego is the biggest thing in teaching leadership.

She leans back in her chair and nods her head in the affirmative. I am surprised by her response and ask, "Don't you find it problematic to teach that way?" She moves her head from side-to-side and clarifies,

> I think it boils down to the same things for all people. All leaders have a hell of a time getting people to feel engaged, feel valued, and to utilize their talents and to

> hold them accountable. Those are all the same problems, I don't care where you come from, you will deal with those issues.

She then indicates that she has coached persons of all races, creeds, and has been very successful. I shake my head in disbelief and ask if that isn't just rationalizing the problem away. She disagrees,

> It's very simple. We make it complicated. It's really as simple as understanding what the goal of the organization is, where the focus is, creating teams of people that have the skills, expertise, and talent to achieve that goal and mission, giving performance feedback on a regular basis, recognition for achieving the things that are in line with the organization, giving them corrective feedback, and celebrating successes, and it's that simple.

My head is spinning trying to keep up with the volume of and speed with which Abby is delivering information to me. She goes on to express her vision of leadership in organizations. I recognize the ideas of authors that we have both read, and we engage in discussion about our favorite organizational communication authors. She mentions names like Buckingham and Clifton (2001) and Covey (1989), while I mention Deetz et al. (2000), Ashcraft and Mumby (2004), and Collinson (2005, 2006). She smiles; I smile back and say, "We're both just big geeks, aren't we." She laughs and nods her head in affirmation.

I change the tenor of the conversation by asking if she considers herself a follower. She replies, "You can't be effective at what I do unless you are willing to be led. I let them influence me and then I influence them..." She laughs and takes a sip of

coffee and continues, "I definitely change my roles. I don't ever think that I always have the answers. Sometimes they just need to be heard." I inquire as to tension she may or may not have experienced over being perceived a leader or a follower. She shakes her head, crosses one leg over the other, and comments,

> It's not about leadership or followership, it's about what do I want to achieve. If I want to influence people to produce a positive outcome that reflects the work environment or the life they are looking for. Then I have to think in the terms of how do I best do that? And maybe in some situations it requires that I'm learning and in some situations it requires more of a strong hold and I don't know if you'd call that leadership or not?

Abby then tells me about the ways that she is required to transition between leadership and followership, and tells me about a situation where she took the wrong approach:

> I'm working with a client right now in an organization where I did the followership listen, listen, listen thing. I asked what about this? What about that? Two years later when I got the contract to come back, because they have the same problems, they said, 'what did we accomplish last time?' I told them today 'I'm going to be blunt because you need to be realistic. So you realize that if you want change you can't blame me, you have to blame yourselves. You can't wait for [change] to happen because you are the ones responsible for it.' So, I was much more in their face which was more of a leadership approach and I think it went really well. I think absolutely it will be more effective than a followership approach would be.

She goes on to say, "You have to have a combination of two-thirds leadership and one-third followership if you're going to influence people." I ask if that is the most efficient way to get results. She clarifies with a story,

> I was helping a group but in a followership kind of way. A couple of them got frustrated and said 'I feel like this is group therapy, what are we actually achieving.' Somebody has to be there to push them to results, otherwise we talk all day but don't get to some result…someone has to say 'Jesus, Mary, and Joseph this is the direction we are going.'

She takes a sip of coffee and looks out toward the window that faces the street and confesses, "I have seen more dissatisfaction in organizations because no one will say 'we're going this way.' People are dying for direction and they can't come to it collectively."

She then leans in to me and confesses in a whisper, "Going to the concept of 'can anybody be taught to be a leader,' I don't think so anymore. At one point I would have said yes. But I don't think so anymore." She clears her throat and attempts to articulate her perspective, "A good example of this is the person who has a strong desire to be a singer and goes on American Idol but they suck, they don't have talent in that area. Could they find that their desires match up with an actual talent and do something that they enjoy, yes!" She takes a breath, puts her hands flat on the table, and declares,

> I do think that it's ridiculous to assume that anyone can be a good leader. It is a different kind of processing and there's an intellectual capacity that's necessary. I absolutely believe that and I never would have said that before.

I struggle to understand, as Abby strains to make her point,

> A good guitar player isn't born a good guitar player; they have to learn the skill. So, you can be taught but you have to have talent as well. I think that we can teach people but we will always have leaders and people that are better at following.

I indicate that I am perplexed by what this conception of leadership would do to an organization. She replies,

> I think it would empower people incredibly. I don't think everybody wants to be a leader…many people are satisfied as followers. The only reason that they move up in hierarchy is because they are being paid more money, not because they like being a leader.

She nods her head and smiles while stating,

> If we teach people good decision making, problem solving, and to value conflict, I think we would come to better solutions and not everybody would be a leader. We still need somebody that has the intuitive feel to say 'I think we are there, let's call it good, we're there.'

I leave the interview frustrated by the results of my discussion with Abby. She is well educated, and was recommended as a competent and successful consultant; yet she reflects the same tired command and control theories of leadership that have plagued us for one hundred years. I resolve to find a critical thinker willing to consider the role of context and history in our racist, sexist, and classist understandings of the leadership-followership dynamic.

3.3 A person of content

Elaine's Interview

Elaine is someone I met a year and a half ago and interact with on a regular basis. For the interview we decided to meet for lunch in a private setting. Elaine is a 44 year old white woman who has worked for military, social service, corporate, and academic industries during the course of her adult life. She currently works for a research institute at the research site. Elaine is a model of pragmatic communication and a critical thinker who always seems to have a solution for whatever problems I present. She is articulate, well read, very punctual, and, I suspect, would be as prepared to talk about threats to the Porcupine Caribou herd (on Alaska's Arctic Coastal Plain) or engage in a philosophic dialogue about Plato's Cave with ease.

Before the interview proper begins we hash out my definition of followership in a very general way, lest she be ill-prepared for the discussion. After we get settled into our lunch nook, I hand Elaine a copy of the informed consent form and she reads and then signs it. I begin the interview *in medias res* by asking about the role of gender, race, and class in her perception of leaders and followers in her occupational history. Elaine begins with a detailed account of her work history and the ways that leadership theory has influenced her organizational reality. In the 1980's leadership theory reflected command and control perspectives that focused on the ways that leaders and followers should act to increase productivity and efficiency in organizations. She says, "It was the Dale Carnegie, you sit at the end of the table. You sit at the right hand of the person running

the meeting. For a female you drop your voice." She reduces the volume of her voice and rolls her eyes, "and you sit in a certain way."

In the early 1990's Elaine shifted career paths and began work in social services which proved to be different from previous experiences: "I worked in the social services where the men were much more feminine. Much more collaborative, conversational, willing to permit conversation that wasn't task, outcome, profit related." Leadership was embodied by people who sat quietly at the end of the table, came with good information, and seemed to thumb their noses at conventional norms of leadership:

> Which was totally contrary to what I knew before which was: you wore the suit; you had the business attire; you carried the brief case; you had lunch at the right place during the day; and you sat in a part of the restaurant so that your boss can see you with your work out.

She sits up in her seat and leans forward, "None of that reflects on your contribution to the enterprise; it's all window dressing….my social services [work] seemed to be more content driven."

Elaine eventually left her job in social services and went to work at a rural military base that was "very isolated." The leadership structure was "all hierarchy, rank, and show. You can be as dumb as a doornail but if you are a light colonel or a 4-star general, you get all of the privileges that come with the position regardless of content." This attention to hierarchy, rank, and class, Elaine says, drove her crazy, "I was put in a position of what you [the researcher] described to the point of absurdity." Elaine indicates that this narrow perspective left little room for women, "…women play one of

two roles: the strong military woman who was either strongly respected or assumed to be butch…or, the dutiful supportive spouse who baked cookies."

However, followership was more transparent and focused less on status and more on action. "There was a whole structure of people who got the work done." This structure operated independent of hierarchy and was focused on action, she says, rather than empty rhetoric. Elaine clarifies,

> …[W]e ignored all of those social niceties. It didn't matter how you were dressed, it didn't matter who you were married to, it didn't matter your education level, it mattered what you brought to the table because…it was more content driven.

As Elaine mentions content again, I furrow my eyebrows and smile. She responds to my non-verbal communication, "I want to be perceived as having content and people I perceive as having content had those qualities [as well]. As I gained content I cared less about perception because I had content. You know those who can do and those who can't dress the part or whatever."

Elaine began work in public relations at the research site at the start of the new millennium, where she immediately identified parallels to her past military work experience. "Moving to academia, it's much like the military except your rank is based on productivity. So, in some sense…" She sat up, put her elbows on the table, sighed, and indicated that the research site system closely parallels the military conceptions of leadership.

I am intrigued by this parallel, and ask if leaders are always active and followers passive. "I think a leader can be both a leader in the traditional sense, literally the first one to lead the charge…and followers literally follow in their draft. So there is an advantage…people who follow because…what's the word…" "Path of least resistance," I interject. She retorts, "Yes. I've seen lots of people like that…[and] it's not a negative in my opinion…if you have too many leaders, where are you going?" Elaine indicates that she's seen groups of "leaders" go in the same direction at the same time. She continues to respond to potential objections before verbalizing, "Sure, but does being a leader imply that you're getting both the idea out there and the follow through—not to me." For Elaine, those in positions of leadership are responsible for defining, discovering, and articulating a vision for the future of the group or organization: "…you rely on followers not to simply put their heads down and trot behind you." Followers, for Elaine, are responsible to themselves and to leaders, for helping to keep the mission and vision of an organization within the bounds of what can be done: "So, I look at followers—not as passive tagalongs—the dogs behind the lead dog to use an Alaskan analogy, but the followers are the ones that say you have given me a defined space to think about [now I'll go to work]." Elaine indicates that leadership is the process of defining the space of interest while followership is the process of coming up with inventive ways of accomplishing that vision. Elaine clarifies with the example of a research institute that decides to focus on bio-medical research,

> As a follower it is my job to find out about isotope analysis of hair as a way of discovering what people are eating because we know [that respondents to] food

> surveys downright lie. Not to imply that lying is malicious, but that we all lie. So, the follower function does not mean that you don't have independence, you don't have unique insights or thoughts, or that you are always told what to do, but that you are following a lead.

I press Elaine to differentiate between good leaders and followers. "I would say the follower that is simply a gopher—an automaton—is a waste to both sides. I'll automate you. I'll make you a machine. I want your human input, follower or not."

Elaine's response has the synapses in my brain firing at a rapid pace, my face is beat red, and I am excited to hear more. Amazed with the clarity of her thinking, I respond by complimenting her vision of followership. Elaine then presents a critique of that "idealized" vision of followership: "I am part of the leadership group and I go back to every line worker [follower] and ask for their input…and to my shock and horror—and my total disgust…It's almost like [they respond with] active apathy. More often than not [the followers] say 'that's nice but I don't give a shit'." Elaine responds to this "active apathy" by asking if her questions would be more valid if communicated by the chief executive of her organization, to which her followers have responded, "We don't care. Elaine, we know that you care, but we think that you are just a freak." When prompted, Elaine admits that much of this attention to problem solving is the product of upbringing, "… It's my default personality. My growing up motto…if you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem, which is an overwhelmingly stupid way to look at the world." She admits that this need to find solutions to problems has been interpreted

negatively in her past work experience but it is "the filter that [she] sees the world through."

I then ask Elaine to put that filter to work and solve the problem of communicating followership in her organization. She indicates that the only way to address inaccuracies in our understandings of followership and leadership is by addressing each person in an organization according to their own preconceptions and biases. She proposes that we teach leadership and followership both inductively and deductively. She furthers her position with an example,

> I'd take somebody like you or me…ask us to describe the ways that we have observed leadership and followership. Get it out there on the table. Find out what the pool of information is. Go back and say—as you're doing your induction—leadership training has always said X. Well wink-wink nudge-nudge we all know that in the real world that it diverges from this framework in these ways.

How then should we be redefining leadership and if we want to be better leaders what does that mean for followers that are doing the work, I ask? "... [I]t depends on your intended audience. If you don't know your audience, or if you're not in a position to know about your audience, I think it's a crap shoot. Induction doesn't work with someone who has no experience."

What followed was surprising to me. I thought we would continue talking about the teaching of leadership and followership, but when I ask about teaching leadership deductively Elaine indicates that I am giving credit "where credit is not remotely deserved." She gives an example of a business person who is married to the only medical

specialist in the community. Based on the need that the community has for a specialist, her husband gets appointed to a committee on fine arts even though he is, according to Elaine, completely dysfunctional and doesn't know a thing about art or leadership. "It has nothing to do with leadership. It has nothing to do with objective assessments…or of service to an organization through leaders or followers; it's a social contract that is totally separate from what we are discussing." She sits back in her chair and confidently takes a bite of the wrap that she ordered for lunch. I become somewhat frustrated, because while I really respect Elaine's opinion, she is being too pessimistic for my taste. I snapped back, "So do we just have to throw the terms leadership and followership out then?" She shrugs her shoulders, sits back in her chair, and responds,

> I don't think you should throw out terms because then you end up with empowerment and paradigm buzzword garbage that sends everybody like me going…oh god. Quit coming up with new terminology just because you don't like the old stuff.

Her reaction immediately makes sense to me. My heart stops racing and I begin to calm down. She continues,

> Much better to say we're going to hold a leadership training that addresses blah, blah, blah. Define the term as it's used in your context and stick with it. If people show up with the expectations that you are going to teach them how to be Lee Iacocca you have a convert possibly.

She stops momentarily to take a breath and, I pick up where she has left off, "If we continue to come up with new terms it will just be a matter of time until we find those

terms are conceptually flawed, just like leadership and followership are." She then extends my thought, "It's better to keep the term if it's useable and simply give it a contextual definition. It seems to be what we're suggesting here"

I am excited. I have read about the interview as a site of co-construction (Kvale, 1996) but had yet to experience it, until now. I follow up quickly, asking if this pragmatic approach is working now. Elaine pauses for a moment, leans forward, and prods me to consider the pragmatic implications of asking "how can we make it [leadership training] work when we use it." She elaborates that it would be an empowering experience to have someone like me [a Communication Professional] come in and offer training that attends to alternative perspectives of leadership and followership in contemporary organizations. Elaine elaborates further, "People can say I know that I'm a follower, but Rob [the Organizational Communication Consultant] told me that I can also lead in certain segments. I may lead in my area, but I am still a follower of this other leader." After saying this she chuckles and exclaims, "I think your concern and approach is well placed, but I would look at the content and not the label."

Elaine's interview produced useful capta and I felt much better about this interview than after the interview with Abby. I perceive that we engaged in a co-construction of something new and exciting. However, her attention to the pragmatic and individualistic focus on "doing" through action troubles me. While useful, this attention to application does not necessarily help me further the theoretical implications of a potential paradigm shift in our understandings of the leadership-followership phenomenon.

3.4 The compassionate educator

Valerie's Interview

Valerie and I met at a working lunch held at the research site one month before the interview. A friend suggested that she had some expertise that I could use in my research. We had an immediate intellectual connection that made for fluid co-constructions. Valerie is an active, vibrant, and intelligent 37 year old white woman. She is an actively engaged well read professional and an advocate for students as part of her job.

Upon her arrival at the Department of Communication, I was struck by the load of materials that she was hauling around. She had just come from a meeting and was headed to yet another after interviewing with me. Before beginning the interview proper we discussed the murky political waters that she negotiates on a daily basis, in pursuit of a reasonable articulation of what leadership means for the research site. We quickly come to the determination that the two of us should run the world; she could be the leader and I would be her dedicated follower. I then read the informed consent form to her. She seemed to be familiar with the process and quickly consented to be a co-researcher in my study. I mentioned a person of mutual affinity and we spoke in superlatives about our mutual acquaintance for two minutes.

I start the interview by asking about her experiences and understanding of followership at the research site:

> You know, it's a bad word and I don't mean that at the [research site], but I think in lots of circles followership means that you're the sheep that follows the leader

> and you don't ask any questions. You just do the job and so we don't talk about followership as a positive thing which is to me such a shame.

Valerie indicates that any discussion of leadership should incorporate followership. To that end she has led a number of structured discussions with students and officers in student organizations about followership noting, "We spend a lot of time trying to educate folks about the important role that followers play in team effort." She indicates that most discussions of followership on campus end with mixed results. The most common rejection of the conceptualization of followership and leadership in a mutual relationship is, "I don't want anything to do with it. I want to be a leader and that's the only way to get anything done." Valerie finds this hegemonic discourse to be ironic and disheartening because she believes, "…in some ways it [followership] is more critical than leadership because there is going to be more followers than there are going to be leaders in a group setting." She goes on to deftly define the ways that followers and leaders interact in organizations:

> I think followers have some obligations: they've got to support the mission, the organization, and the leader; they've got to be critical when times call for it, and they have got to help redirect as needed. They have got to defend the leader in the mission when it comes down to it and they have to share their ideas to help make it the best decision possible and making sure that they are constantly on track. And then leaders have an obligation to the followers to help to clearly articulate where the group is going, but also to make sure that everybody is getting a chance to help make decisions about which turns we take along the line.

Valerie then indicates that she is really excited about group and team theories of leadership because they tend to reduce the role of hierarchy and the focus on separation and difference. She forwards a more cooperative vision of leadership and followership in groups: "... [T]o me [leadership] is that fluid that someone could be taking a leadership role when they have got some expertise in an area and then they back off when somebody else has an idea to throw out there. So it is very, very fluid." However, her observations of students and student government at the research site indicate a real difference between the theory that she teaches and the ways that students turn that theory into action:

> Students on campus [tend to define] difference between those two [leadership and followership] as...back to those old stereotypes of the leader as the one who is doing most of the talking. The leader is the one who is making the decisions. The leader is the one who usually has the right answer...the followers are there to do the grunt work, to not do the glamorous tasks...the leader is the one that deserves the praise at the end and not necessarily the followers.

Valerie stops for a moment and takes a breath. I take advantage of this moment to ask how much attributions of leadership are tied to race, gender, and socioeconomic class: "Oh totally, it usually works out that the person who is most outspoken is often seen as the leader." She indicates that superficial systems of evaluation do not take into account the role of active followership. She elaborates with a story, "I was at a meeting last night where the only male in the room was the leader and the rest would have called themselves followers in that kind of setting. Yeah, absolutely, I think...there are some

commonalities that would make someone have an easier time being labeled as the leader and wouldn't question so much that person as a leader."

Valerie indicates that U.S. Americans often think of leaders as superhuman white men over the age of thirty. Inspired by the depth of Valerie's knowledge and awareness of diversity problematics related to leadership, I take this opportunity to ask what happens when we see ourselves as a leader, but our skin is the "wrong" color, or our voice too "effeminate;" how can we get beyond those cultural stereotypes and be seen as leader. She notes, "That's something we've been struggling with [in my unit] is how do we attract persons that don't necessarily see themselves as leaders but clearly have the ability to be a leader...we constantly confront students that come in and say I'm a leader and this program speaks to me." Valerie sits up in her seat, her pupils constrict, and she continues,

> How dare you say that about yourself! That's a gift that is given to you... we haven't overcome [that problem], maybe we need to call it [leadership] something else so that anybody who is interested in working more effectively as a team member and is interested in creating positive change in whatever community they are involved... it's that. It is not leadership.

Valerie feels strongly that it is the role of professional educators to recognize that there is no "cookie cutter mold for leadership" and to provide the tools to any student interested in creating positive change, helping others to be more creative, and improving the human condition. She concludes by asking, "but how do we put that in simple terms and put it in a nice little package."

Is it the package itself that is the problem, I ask? Valerie shakes her head and then smiles before indicating that we have got a long way to go in an effort to present a pluralistic vision of leadership. There is a noticeable tension shift, Valerie's vocal intonation and pace have changed, and I make a strategic decision to change the flow of the conversation. Asking her if it is okay if we imagine that the two of us are charged with conceptualizing followership in a more positive way, what, I wonder aloud, would it look like: "I don't know. I've had students come back from substantive conversations about followership fired up and saying that it is not the right word. Unfortunately we haven't come up with anything yet."

I briefly touch on some of the scholarship by Collinson (2005, 2006) and Ashcraft and Mumby (2004) and Valerie sits up and listens attentively and then says, "I've touched on the word true leaders and collaborators and I guess the one I like most is collaborators." My eyebrows arch when she mentions collaborators; Valerie smiles and continues: "I mean collaboration to me means that you are working just as hard as the other folks around the table and your opinions and ideas are just as viable as everyone else's sitting and you're all sitting at the same level." She stops just long enough to take a drink of green tea that I offered before the interview and continues,

> There's such a fluid nature that we don't need to separate the two. We don't need another term for leadership; we just need to start calling it the same thing and talk about what are the commonalities between what we think of as followership and what is already going on with leadership and the common understanding of that.

I continue to press Valerie in asking her if in a patriarchal and hierarchical society we would ever use collaboration instead of leadership or followership. "That's the problem. It is the society we live in…it's cultural. It is so cultural."

We begin to dialogue about the role of linguistics in our understandings of leadership and followership. Valerie complains about the ways we objectify leadership and followership as though they are tangible entities as opposed to something that we construct. She indicates that she is intimately aware of the political implications of admitting to being a follower: "I think the key is just being conscious of what it takes to be a good follower and to show that you are a contributing member." She asks me if I have a good definition of followership and I indicate in the affirmative and say that followership is the process of courageous, dynamic, educated people that are intensely engaged in forwarding the mission and vision of the organization. There is a moment of silence, Valerie smiles, looks down, and then says, "That definition gives me goose bumps." I smile and ask if it's easier to come up with a new word or to change our cultural understanding of followership. Valerie rolls her eyes, sighs, and tells me that we need to get over the word and focus instead on actually role modeling followership for our students: "I mean we've just got to start somewhere and maybe the word will come later. If it is the chicken and the egg, I'd say go with the definition and what it means and how we are doing it."

I then ponder whether we can do followership well when we don't have an accurate conception of what it is, to which Valerie offers,

> Maybe we've got to start celebrating followership first because that means it is happening out there. We all know it is happening but we are not celebrating it. We are celebrating leadership and so maybe we recognize teams that have just done dynamite work instead of individuals.

Valerie sits back in her chair and takes a sip of tea, and then leans forward anticipating the question I'm about to ask,

> I don't know, I just think it is time [to] scrap the top down approach and let's start with the folks at the bottom of the hierarchy and get those folks rallied and going. Then people are going to jump on board this concept of collaboration.

But isn't our conception of the leadership-followership dynamic important to producing a guiding vision for followers to get behind? I ask:

> We've got to get some people working on what it [leadership and followership] means. We have got to develop some talking points so that we're not just doing it, this is really a critical piece because we are able to explain what we're doing. We've got to...have a common understanding so we can explain it in simple and understandable terms that convey the energy and passion for what it is all about. So I think you're right. You have got to spend the time on the development of the concept and then start moving it, you know start showing the people who are going to want to be a part of this. People need to see this [alternative conception] in action at the same time.

"Eureka!" I think to myself. I finally found someone who has a robust theoretical background and enough applied experience to help further an alternative conception of

followership. Valerie was immensely helpful in allowing me to come closer to knowledge of followership that is culturally and historically relevant. However, as much as I like the term "collaboration," it is plagued by cultural stereotypes that conflate collaboration with the private sphere, and all the distortions that go along with separate sphere ideology. Collaboration is considered to be a feminine quality, which would necessitate a significant paradigm shift in the way that leadership is conceived at the research site—before suggesting a paradigm shift—I need to seek a term that has all of the positive elements of collaboration and none of the cultural baggage—a daunting task to say the least.

3.5 The experts

Patsy and Eddy's Interview

As the reader will recall, Valerie met with me in between meetings, on a day full of meetings. Upon completing her interview with me, Valerie asked if she could leave some of the material that she had been carrying around and avoid being tardy for her meeting with Patsy. I did not know who Patsy was, but had no problem helping Valerie in whatever way I could. When Valerie returned to gather her things from my office, she thanked me for all the fun she had and asked me to contact Patsy. Apparently Patsy and Valerie agreed that they both wanted to be part of the research that I was conducting. I was happy to speak with anyone that Valerie recommended. I contacted Patsy and we agreed to meet on Friday of the same week.

Prior to my 2 p.m. meeting with Patsy I attended a presentation on leadership from a consultant who had been brought in from the East Coast. A free lunch was being

offered and as a poor graduate student I never pass up a free meal. However, I had every intention of sticking around long enough to get annoyed with the discourse, and then leave to prepare for my interview with Patsy. I came in and noticed a friend of mine sitting on the couch. I smiled at him and he gave me one of those manly hand gestures [pointing at me], that I could only guess meant hello. I decided to pass on lunch—I don't really do salads—sat next to him and talked about something of little consequence for a couple of minutes. The meeting sounded like every other leadership meeting I had been to: totally focused on command and control theories of leadership, and rendering followership invisible. That is, until I challenged one of the points the speaker was making about leadership. The expert, whom I would later come to know as Eddy, deftly maneuvered around the question in an attempt to keep the meeting on-task and avoid any messy questions about followership. I interjected politely and insisted on an answer to my question. It was then that a woman from across the room asked my name. I said that I was Rob Jordan, a Master's student from the Department of Communication, and I would like an answer to my question. She introduced herself as Patsy and requested that we continue this discussion during our interview later, where she and Eddy would be happy to address any of my concerns. I sat back in the couch and blushed a bright red. What had I gotten myself into?

As the meeting came to an end I dutifully sat on a couch in the large lounge waiting for Patsy or Eddy to approach me. Neither did, so I walked across the room and approached Patsy, a 65-year old white woman, whose presence far outweighs her slight frame. She holds dual positions in two departments on campus. I would later discover

that Patsy and Eddy were friends and colleagues in graduate school. I gently asked where they would like to do the interview. Patsy stated, "We will do the interview right here, and we need to be done with this in fifty minutes." I was kicking myself for being loud and arrogant and was willing to do whatever it took to have them stop staring holes through me.

I begin the interview with Patsy while Eddy is still conversing with some of the attendees to the leadership meeting. I begin by asking Patsy what followership means to her. She replies quickly, "Followership is the act of getting on board. Believing what needs to happen and putting one's shoulder to the wheel." Dare I ask what putting one's shoulder behind the wheel means? I decide I have to. Patsy replies, "Doing the work. Getting it done, pitching in, [or] making the garlands." I begin to have negative thoughts about the interview thinking to myself, "Well this doesn't seem to be going so well; and maybe this will be one of those unintentional 'practice interviews' that my professors have warned me about." However, I am desperate to connect with these women, so I ask about strategies for teaching leadership, and I observe a noticeable change in the expression on Patsy's face. She smirks and says,

> My strategy is twofold: theoretical study, learning leadership theory, learning group dynamics, understanding roles people play in groups. The other half is opportunities to practice; if you only do it but don't understand it, or if you only understand it but don't do it you've missed an important synergy.

Patsy explains in depth the role of theory in deductive teaching models and the problems that arise when leadership theory—like trait theories—are attended to, suggesting it is the

responsibility of educators and scholars to, "reformulate theory. We change what we think works to what really works. So, we have to be very mindful of the fact that theories don't apply in every situation."

As Patsy is answering my question Eddy joins us by taking a seat adjacent to Patsy and across from me. Eddy is a 55 year old white woman who has a strong masculine presence that intimidates me. I will later learn that she is the director of a leadership program on the East Coast, and has spent much of her adult life in corrections, working her way from corrections officer to Commissioner of Corrections. As she takes her seat I smile—she does not—but does indicate that assessment tools offer a snapshot of a person, far from a permanent profile. "There are other ways," she says, "that you can learn and grow by practicing [and] you will get better at what you do." Patsy moves right to the edge of her seat and puts her hand on an ottoman to her left where I have placed my audio recorder and says, "We have to remember that Myers-Briggs measures preference, not ability. So, we may have a preference for a certain way of taking in information; that doesn't mean that we don't have the ability to do it otherwise." Eddy nods in affirmation. I wait for two seconds of silence and then mention a series of problematic conversations I have had with leadership coaches and their universal and totalizing perspectives on leadership. I cannot even finish the question before Eddy crosses her arms and says, "Keep wondering about it [be]cause it should be scary if that's what she is telling you." Patsy nods her head up and down affirming Eddy's argument,

> I have to agree…Eddy mentioned this morning, we learn leadership in our families of origin, and we learn it from our early role models. I think that you will find a lot of people in leadership positions that are first children.

Eddy lifts her right hand up and points her index finger at Patsy and says, "I'm not. I'm the baby." Patsy clarifies her position, "Right and…whether you are the first child or the baby you learn. But, your experiences [in life and leadership] will be different if you are a 35 year old man or a 50 year old black woman because people look at you differently." Eddy unfolds her arms and raises them toward Patsy and says, "And really I'm agreeing with Patsy, your life experience makes you who you are. The black woman and the white guy will be entirely different based on who they are and what their own personal values are." I can barely turn my head before Patsy says, "And how people see them." Eddy smiles and nods her head:

> That's what I was trying to talk about in the world of corrections; I was a woman that didn't belong. My values were very different from what had been there before, and it was a struggle for me initially to make any headway at all and be accepted in that system. So, if somebody told me to behave like a white guy [it wouldn't work]. I got typified because I was a woman; I was a bitch; I was a ball buster, but a guy with those behaviors would be a go-getter or an up-and-comer. So you can't really advise people the same way across the board, and I'd be afraid. Be very afraid.

Patsy smirks and nods her head and contributes her own story,

> I went to meet a group of board members of a non-profit because I had sent in a proposal to do consulting. This was a Fresh Air Camp [a not-for-profit agency that provides free summer vacations, in rural locations, to children from low-income communities] and I had been a camper for many years. I was also a professor. So, where you could find the combination of skills that I could bring would be really very rare. I went to this board meeting [and one of the members was] the old [former] governor Hugh, an old white guy. I made my presentation and it was going to be six months worth of considerable work and the bill was going to be ten thousand dollars. He [Hugh] turned and said to the rest of the board 'we're going to pay this little girl ten thousand dollars for that?' I was 50 years old.

Patsy lowers her eyes and shakes her head. Eddy interjects, "And he never would have said that if you were a man." Patsy continues, "Never! So, I pulled myself up to my full 6' 6"..." She slides forward in the chair, stiffens her back, and raises her arms above her head and says, "I invite you to find someone with my combination of skills that meets your satisfaction. I'll be leaving." Eddy looks into Patsy's eyes, reaches with her right hand for Eddy's left hand, and says, "Yep." Both women then turn and look at me. I nod my head and say "I'm profoundly sorry." They both nod and smile.

I take this momentary break to ask if either of them know how perceptions of what a leader is—or should be—affect them. Patsy offers,

> You know I don't really play a leadership role at this University...[B]ut, I do feel as though I'm a leader here and I think that there are others who would

> corroborate that. While I don't have a leadership position, to me leadership is making things happen. You see something that needs to happen, you figure out how to make it happen, whatever your role, and you're a leader.

Eddy interjects, "Just because you have the title, I think it's irrelevant." Patsy nods her head and sits back in her seat saying, "Sometimes you can have the title and you're not a leader at all. You're just self-protecting."

Prior to our interview Eddy talked extensively about the role of action in leadership, indicating that effective leaders take informed risks, but chances none-the-less. However, there was no mention of evaluating followers, so I ask, "What about followers? What about good followers being active? Eddy puts her hand to her mouth and squints while Patsy leans forward in her chair and says, "In a high performance team, leadership rotates informally to the place where it ought to evolve. So if I have expertise in an area that nobody else on the team does, whether I'm the leader or not, in a good team people are comfortable taking leadership in that arena. So…" I interject, "If good leadership and good followership are typified by action, then how do we typify bad leadership and bad followership?" Eddy frowns and leans forward in her chair and states,

> I qualify my take action [statement earlier], to do your homework and make sure you can articulate [your] reasoning. I think that bad leaders and bad followers are people that don't have sound reason, can't articulate why [their reasons] and are doing it for their egos…the wrong reasons.

Patsy is nodding as Eddy finishes her answer, and then interjects,

> I echo that—in that—I consider bad leadership as somebody whose motivation is for personal benefit rather than to benefit the organization. When you have the best interest of the organization at heart, you can make mistakes and that doesn't make you a bad leader, but the minute it [prescribed action] is for you—and not for us—whatever you do turns bad.

I am shocked that these two women and I are co-constructing and expanding our conceptions of followership, and it feels incredible. I look up and notice that Patsy is on the edge of her chair leaning towards me, and Eddy is doing the same. I write a note on the yellow notepad that I have in my lap, "Things are going well, keep it up." I then ask about the role of cultural stereotypes and to my surprise my question solicits more data. Patsy says, "Well what it does is make people like Hugh [the former Governor] say, 'what's this little girl gonna do,' because I'm small, I'm a woman, and he doesn't know me." Eddy arches her eyebrows and smiles before saying, "I think that's what I got at the outset of my career. I was a short white woman that worked in a world where I didn't belong. I think you're right…" She looks directly at me,

> People size you up by what you look like, and our society continues to grapple with that. Look at the [2008] Presidential election right now, it's the same thing. People are grappling with what do you look like, instead of what do you know and in the case of presidential politics that really should be about experience and knowledge. As opposed to the fact you're either black or you're a woman. So, I think you're seeing it play out right now.

Patsy sits up in her chair and says, "[Many of us] grow up not thinking of ourselves as leaders because of images in popular culture. So, it's less easy to assume a leadership role comfortably." Eddy crosses her legs, leans back, and says, "Which is why I talked about having a mentor that doesn't look like you; [people need] to be open to that. You don't just do a mentorship because [your mentor] has the same ideas or values you do." Patsy turns toward Eddy and raises her voice slightly while asking, "If you were a middle aged white man would you want a middle aged Jewish woman as your mentor?" Eddy turns her right hand over so that her palm is facing upward and responds, "It would be hard but they could learn an awful lot."

Patsy furthers Eddy's idea,

> This is true. But would you want that? What you want from a mentor is someone who can network, who can network you in, who can make those connections for you, who has a lot of influence. We look for influence in our mentors, but you may not be perceived as having influence whether you have it or not, because you don't fit that norm.

Eddy concedes, "Yeah, I think you are right." Both nod and take a drink of lemonade that was provided at the leadership meeting. I take a moment to grab a glass of lemonade myself as to arrest a tickle in the back of my throat. As I return, I smile at both Eddy and Patsy—they smile back—and I ask about the role of gender in perceptions of leadership and followership. Patsy gets the jump on Eddy and says,

> There is a new body of literature that says that leadership with feminine qualities is making a big difference and more desirable than the old command and control

masculine models. So, nurturing, supporting, empathic, listening skills, multi-tasking abilities, are all qualities that seem to be desired in the organizations currently.

Eddy furthers the concept,

> And the step further I go to support that is [on the East Coast] we have an organization called the Women's Policy Institute, which is doing research on the economic condition of women, and they just published a report about women on corporate boards, both private, public, and not. The data is showing businesses with corporate boards [with three or more women] have a better bottom line than businesses without...So, it does make a difference.

I note to myself that the interview now seems to be going well. Patsy and Eddy do not seem to be scowling at me anymore, so I take this opportunity to bring up my point of contention about the lack of followership discussion among leadership theorists. Patsy responds, "Leadership and followership [exist in] a yin-yang relationship, you can't have one without the other. It's a circle. It's not a line and it revolves..."

She traces a circle in the air with her hands.

> We were at a meeting this morning on the topic of building [another] leadership program at the research site, and at the end of the day we've had this discussion a bazillion times and we all say 'wasn't that nice,' because we didn't have any followers. My predominant question is who's going to make the garlands. A big piece of leadership is figuring out who's going to do it.

Eddy shakes her head from side to side and says,

> I think a little bit differently. I'm tired of hearing the theory and the broad vision of things. I don't want to talk about it at the 30,000 foot level. Make the garlands; make the coffee; just do it. That's where a lot of people get stuck. They get stuck at the 30,000 foot level.

Eddy lifts her arm above her head and Patsy nods saying, "I'd like to say that you need both. Without the other [followership] the one [leadership] is useless. Sometimes they are embodied in the same person and sometimes they are not. Over time it doesn't work." When there is no intervening dialectic tension both state that the key to being successful in an organization is, "being flexible and adaptive in making the transition between leader and follower roles."

I become frustrated that Patsy began to answer my question but Eddy took us in another direction. So I say, "We had this discussion about leadership [previous leadership meeting] for 45 minutes today and didn't talk about followership..." Patsy nearly flies out of her chair as she interjects, "We didn't?" I lean forward and unclasp my hands showing my palms to both women and say,

> We did but we didn't. The term leadership was used over and over while followership was assumed, but never overtly mentioned. Is there power in using the term leadership while allowing followership to remain invisible?

Patsy sits back, raises her eyebrows, takes a sip of lemonade, and concedes,

> That's an interesting question. If we're really thinking about the yin-and-yang, [followership cannot be] lesser. They're [leadership and followership] complimentary and they're both required. Eddy gave this list of characteristics all

> of which apply to followers and all of which apply to leaders [in determining quality leaders]. So, I think that we have talked about followership but we don't like that word.

Both Eddy and Patsy stop speaking for a moment and look at each other and raise their eyebrows. I take advantage of the momentary pause to ask about the implications of cultural baggage that seems to surround followership. Both Patsy and Eddy verbally indicate that organizations do not run without leaders and followers. Patsy states, "I think it helps if ...maybe the word followership is not what we're looking for or best describes the role." Eddy interjects,

> I'm not sure, but the more I hear—in the last five minutes—I've come to think that our language gets in the way of what we are trying to get at. So, the words leadership and followership are not articulating very well where we think we ought to be doing.

Patsy adds, "It infers superior and subordinate and it's not that..." Both Eddy and Patsy are nodding their heads up and down and grinning. Eddy continues,

> I think that it's about creating good teams, furthering the mission of an organization—or a business—and being clear about what we mean. I wish there was another word for yin-and-yang, or if we could figure out a word instead of leadership or followership.

Patsy clarifies further,

> We all lead in our own arenas, and we all follow—nobody doesn't follow—not even the President of the United States. Even if we want to give a name to the

> supreme omnipotent one—whatever we call that role—not even that [being] doesn't follow.

I am excited at the possibility of making a connection between what Valerie described, in a previous interview, and Eddy's and Patsy's need for a new term. I ask if collaboration is a better way of conceptualizing this process.

Eddy does not allow me to finish my question before interjecting, "Yeah. Don't call me a leader, call me a collaborator—yeah that feels better—don't call me a follower, call me a contributor." Both co-researchers turn, look, smile, and nod their heads in unison. Patsy closes the interview, saying,

> Yeah, contributor—and we all play multiple roles—then we [free ourselves from leader-follower labels]. If I'm the professor in the class and I have nine students who are all equally engaged in the learning, I'm still going to be called the professor and it gives me some obligations and responsibilities, but I'm not always taking leadership in the class. We are collaborating, cooperating, trying to reach a common goal, and we have different roles—some overlapping and some distinct.

3.6 Description to final analysis

I am elated by the results of my qualitative interviews with Valerie, Eddy, and Patsy. I feel that I have come to an understanding of the way that followership is done at the research site. All six of my co-researchers' conversational interviews have provided interesting and insightful perspectives into their experiences of followership at the research site. The interview process was—and is—a revealing glimpse into the lived

reality of each co-researcher in that their narratives are telling of their perceptions, identities, and their constructions of how followership is performed. I have found myself relating to—and frustrated with—each of my co-researcher's experiences, feelings, and insights throughout the interview process. It decide that no more interviews are needed. It is time that the researcher—as research tool—move on to the analysis stage of the research.

Chapter 4

Human Science Research Analysis

"Leadership research has frequently been at best fragmented and at worst trivial, too often informed by the rather superficial ideas of management and academic consultants keen to peddle the latest pre-packed list of essential qualities deemed necessary for individual leaders and as the prescribed solution to all leadership dilemmas. Within business schools and management departments leadership has remained a 'Cinderella' subject...Consequently, the intellectual integrity of leadership as a legitimate and important field of study has remained open to question."

(David Collinson & Keith Grint, 2005, p. 5)

In the last chapter, I provided narrative descriptions of six co-researchers' interviews to suggest an understanding of the ways that followership is created and re-created at the research site. The following analysis broadly thematizes the lived experience of my co-researchers while attending to my feminist critical subjectivities, paying special attention to the ironic, ambiguous, and contradictory ways that leadership and followership are constructed in contemporary organizations. Eisenberg and Goodall (2004) state, "Feminist thought and research is producing the most significant shift in our current thinking about the relationship between communication processes and organizational power relations" (p. 165). Put simply, this research co-constructs a vision of followership that seeks liberation for those subjugated, oppressed, and marginalized by mundane hegemonic constructions of leadership and followership at the research site.

Incorporating poststructuralist and feminist sensibilities, I address hegemonic narratives of leadership and followership which serve as legitimizing institutional, ideational forces that articulate a system of meaning which privileges certain group interests over others. This concentration on the political nature of organizational discourse focuses attention to the relationship between narrative structure and the process of interpretation, elucidating the process by which dominant meaning systems emerge. Crotty (1998) reasons, "[Feminist] critical inquiry illuminates the relationship between power and culture and, in this picture of things, culture comes to be looked upon with a good measure of suspicion" (p. 158).

A critical analytical focus pays close attention to what the poststructuralist, "...permits—nay, invites—no, incites—us to reflect upon our method[s] and explore new ways of knowing" (Richardson, 2000, p. 929); while attending to Ashcraft and Mumby's (2004) feminist communicological ethic which implores researchers to "...[D]raw attention to how particular communication practices privilege some interests and forms of difference over others, and to examine the consequences of such processes of privilege" (p. 129). This communicology perspective recognizes human realities as socially constructed in a world with enduring social and material systems of communication that exist prior to individual cognition, rejecting grand narratives in favor of local storytelling (Eisenberg & Goodall, 2004). From this perspective, the communication of leadership in the research site is recognized as a process of power-based reality constructions that fail to appreciate how meaning is co-constructed through dialectical forms of talk that are resisted in a multiplicity of ways (Fairhurst, 2001).

Ashcraft and Mumby (2004) and Collinson (2005) strongly advocate for the use of dialectics that help researchers analyze the contradictory and ironic ways that organizational constructions like leadership and followership are created and re-created; recommending a series of dialectics in that, "[A] dialectical stance draws attention to irony, ambiguity, and contradiction in gender-work relations and examines through the connections between micro-level communicative processes and macro-level discursive, political, and economic forces" (Ashcraft & Mumby, 2004, p. 120). Eisenberg and Goodall (2004) affirm, "... [N]arratives that emerge from conflicts vital [to] aspects of cultural storytelling may also be used to identify oppositional dialectics and to open dialogues" (p. 169).

Most central to the argument made here are two primary dialectic analytics suggested by Collinson (2005) and Ashcraft and Mumby (2004): control/resistance and materiality/discourse. Dialectic is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary (1977) as, "a method of reasoning that compares and contrasts opposing points of view in order to find a new point of view that will incorporate whatever is true in the originals" (p. 715). The opposing points of view in dialectic reasoning are sometimes referred to as thesis and antithesis; the new point of view is referred to as the synthesis (McTaggart, 1964). Conceptions of leadership tend to see power and control as unproblematic forms of organizational authority while resistance is viewed as abnormal or irrational. When considered at all, power is conceived narrowly as either positive (i.e., empowering followers) or negative (synonymous with coercion). Naïve conceptions of the leadership-followership dynamic have led organizational members of the research site to overlook

the role that power and resistance play in this "contentious but mutually defining relationship," (Collinson, 2005). Ashcraft and Mumby (2004) view the dialectic of discourse and materiality as a mutually defining and resistant space within contemporary organizations, saying, "Organizational narratives [like leadership and followership] do more than inform members about appropriate or inappropriate behavior; they provide fundamental organizing frames that people take on, accommodate, resist, and transform" (p. 124).

The dialectic analytics of Ashcraft and Mumby (2004) and Collinson (2005) serve as a guide in analyzing three themes and sub-themes that have emerged from my conversational interviews (Kvale, 1996) with six co-researchers. However, I reserve the right to employ these analytics within my feminist communicological ethic, incorporating the theories and methods of critical feminist and poststructuralist researchers.

4.1 Theme one: Conceptual verisimilitude

In the process of thematic analysis, it became clear to me that conceptions of followership and leadership at the research site do not reflect the day-to-day doing of leadership and followership. Ashcraft and Mumby (2004) propose a communicological approach to ambiguous and contradictory institutions that, "examines the reciprocal, dialectical, and mutually defining character of the symbolic/discursive and material conditions of organizing" (p. 123). Central to this communicology is an understanding that discourse renders the world relevant and arbitrates our experience of it. Organizational members produce realities that precipitate and become naturalized over time, reflecting the ability of the enfranchised to shape the realities of the

disenfranchised. As Valerie states, "... [I]n lots of circles followership means that you're the sheep that follows the leader and you don't ask any questions. You just do the job and so we don't talk about followership as a positive thing which is to me such a shame." When analyzed according to Ashcraft and Mumby's dialectic of materiality/discourse and Collinson's (2005) control/resistance, we understand that, within the research site, a hierarchy exists that privileges certain archetypes of leadership. These archetypes tend to privilege men, European Americans, heterosexuals, the able-bodied, and middle and upper class. On the basis of these varying levels of privilege, dominant group members occupy management positions that they use—consciously or unconsciously—to create and maintain communication systems such as leadership and followership that reflect, reinforce, and promote hegemonically masculine subjectivities which situate leadership as vital, active, integral to success, efficiency, and profit, while followership is a passive, common, or ordinary part of doing business. Directly or indirectly, these dominant constructions of leadership impede the progress of those persons whose lived experiences are not reflected in the organizational systems of communication (Orbe, 1998). Take Patsy's account of the challenges white women face in attempting to embody the masculine subjectivities that are associated with leadership at the research site: "[Many of us] grow up not thinking of ourselves as leaders because of images in popular culture. So, it's less easy [for us] to assume a leadership role comfortably." Hegemonic discourses of leadership that ignore the vital role that followers play tends to require nearly superhuman qualities and efforts from leaders. For example, Abby defines leadership this way:

> It [defining leadership] is as simple as understanding what the goal of the organization is, where the focus is, creating teams of people that have the skills, expertise, and talent to achieve that goal and mission, giving performance feedback on a regular basis, recognition for achieving the things that are in line with the organization, giving corrective feedback, celebrating successes, and it's that simple.

Far from "simple" this vision of leadership seems to require a highly specialized set of skills. This construction is confirmed when Abby says, "...[I]t's ridiculous to assume that anyone can be a good leader. [Leadership requires] a different kind of processing and there's an intellectual capacity that's necessary. I absolutely believe that..."

A critical analysis of Abby's definition of leadership reveals the symbolic, hierarchical, existential, and psychoanalytical basis of leadership power relations at the research site, while Valerie's statement, "Sure, I think all leadership is political," exemplify the ways that power relations in her organizational life are a deeply embedded and inescapable feature of leadership structures, cultures, practices and relations at the research site. Yet, by focusing almost exclusively on leaders' power, hegemonic conceptions of leadership retain a rather deterministic and absolutist feel that underestimates followers' agency and resistance. In this sense, these conceptions of leadership paradoxically mirror the dualistic, dichotomous, and individualistic inconsistencies evident in popular cultural stereotypes.

Is it any wonder then, based on this construction of hegemonically masculine leadership, that the first noticeable commonality among the entire group of co-researchers

was a difficulty in identifying followership? This theme surfaced in every one of my co-researchers' interviews in very similar ways. Valerie asserted, "I've had students come back from substantive conversations about followership fired up and saying that it is not the right word. Unfortunately we haven't come up with anything yet [to replace followership]." Others admitted to a real frustration with the way that their lived experience is not reflected in hegemonic discourses of leadership and followership at the research site. Eddy, Valerie, and Abby say quite plainly that the cultural baggage associated with the terms leadership and followership makes organizational life more complicated and ambiguous than it needs to be. This is typified by Patsy and Eddy forwarding Valerie's concept of collaboration rather than leadership-followership, "Don't call me a leader, call me a collaborator—yeah that feels better—don't call me a follower, call me a contributor."

The term verisimilitude was advanced by Karl Popper (1962), in his philosophy of science. Popper held that the goal of science is increasing verisimilitude or "an approximation toward or closeness to the truth about the way the world really is" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 170). Popper believed that competing theories could be evaluated in their relative closeness to truth. This conception of "truth" assumes that there is one totalizing truth, a position that many philosophers find epistemologically indefensible. However, the term verisimilitude as understood by human scientists now is used in ways quite different from those intended by Popper. Of the three overlapping definitions, one emerges as the most appropriate approximation-as it allows us to distinguish between reality, appearance, and semblance in assessing truth claims: "A narrative account is said

to have the quality of verisimilitude when it has the appearance (not approximation, or semblance) of truth or reality" (Schwandt, 2001, p. 170). Schwandt's wording allows for a plurality of truths that are all socially constructed among competing interests in dialectical tension with one another (Hegel, 1989). When one considers Patsy's statement, "I've come to think that our language gets in the way of what we are trying to get at...the words leadership and followership are not articulating very well where we think we ought to be going," there seems then to be convincing evidence that discourses of leadership and followership at the research site lack "the appearance of truth or reality." As Crotty (1997) asserts,

> Critical researchers [must remain] alive to the contribution that false consciousness makes to oppression and manipulation and invites researchers and participants (ideally one and the same) to discard false consciousness, open themselves to new ways of understanding and take effective action for change. (p. 157)

4.1.1 Co-theme one: Archetypal leadership

Based in large part on the lack of verisimilitude associated with conceptions of followership and leadership at the research site, organizational members seek out models of leadership and followership that exist within popular culture. These archetypes of leadership attend to theories of leadership that portray leaders as omniscient, beneficent, charismatic, mythological, and hegemonically masculine figures. For example, as Abby confirms, "Going to the concept of can anybody be taught to be a leader, I don't think so." Abbys' conception of leadership is exemplified by Weber (1974):

> [Leaders are] set apart from ordinary men [sic] and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least exceptional powers and qualities which are not accessible to the ordinary person, on the basis of which the individual concerned is treated as a leader. How the quality in question would be ultimately judged from ethical, aesthetic, or other such points of view is naturally entirely indifferent for purposes of definition. What is alone important is actually regarded by those subject to charismatic authority, by [the leaders] followers or disciples. (pp. 358-359)

As the respondents indicate, what lies behind many of our conceptions of leadership is another more basic dimension, namely archetypes of leadership that are structured according to images of fathers, heroes, saviors, and kings (Neuberger, 1990). The father symbolizes the admissibility of an emotional dimension in addition to the objective-rational dimension, as well as the fact that there is an authority where all power is centralized and where reality is defined. The hero acts as a symbol for the ideal of success and the fact that superhuman achievements are possible. The savior makes it clear that there are still large scale perspectives that are worth supporting, and that there are solutions for urgent problems. The king acts as a symbol that belongs at the top of the hierarchy and is different from the rest of the organization. Further, he is a reminder that being admitted to the Mt. Olympus of leadership is worthwhile because all the tension and extroversion required to be a leader are worth the sacrifice.

These archetypes of leaders and followers can leave organizational members asking where they fit within the pantheon of leaders. For example, Patsy recounts a

sexist interaction with former Governor Hugh which occurs when Patsy fails to represent his idealized or archetypal construction of leader; her slight frame and height violated Governor Hugh's expectations of what a leader looks like, so he responded by exclaiming, "...[W]e're going to pay this little girl ten thousand dollars for that?" He questioned why they were going to pay her that much money, and Eddy attempted to put this interaction in context by saying, "Well what [exclusive archetypes of leadership] does is make people like Hugh [the former Governor] say, 'what's this little girl gonna do,' because Patsy's small, a woman, and he doesn't know [her]. I think that's what I got at the outset of my career. I was a short, white woman that worked in a world that I didn't belong."

It seems then that many of the archetypes of leaders at the research site are decidedly masculine. In fact many of the social connotations connected with the concept of leadership are, to a large extent, influenced by patriarchy. These patriarchal constructions of leadership focus attention on difference and separation, as present in Eddy's narrative, ".... I got typified because I was a woman; I was a bitch; I was a ball buster, but a guy with those behaviors would be a go-getter or an up-and-comer."

The use of archetypes can be helpful for organizational members gaining perspective of cultural expectations of leadership and followership. However, these archetypes attend to masculine subjectivities like verbosity, arrogance, and charisma which emerge from largely individualistic and competitive models that value masculine forms of self-representation. Historically, leaders have been white males that "do" leadership as a reflection of their own lived experience. Power based leadership

discourses at the research site have failed to address the dynamic, contradictory, and ambiguous nature of leadership and followership. Any reasonable account of the leadership-followership dynamic within the research site must draw attention to the unitary, monolithic, and myopic role of leadership in favor of followership as characterized by Abby's statement, "You have to have a combination of two-thirds leadership and one-third followership if you're going to influence people."

4.1.2 Co-theme two: Alternative conception of followership

I am compelled by the capta constructed in this research to call for a feminist revisioning of followership as distinct from leadership while simultaneously occupying an un-marginalized space. However, this research process does not allow for the research commitments necessary for such a revisioning. Instead, it is my intention to explicate what this revisioning might look like. A feminist revisioning of followership must start with an uncovering of the tensions inherent in a feminist revisioning and then use these tensions to create a vision that has the potential for radical organizational change that can benefit women and members of other marginalized groups. Marshall (1989) describes revisioning as "not rejecting the heritage we have but looking for the functions and creative potential of female and male patterns of being, especially drawing from archetypal understanding to go beyond the limits of social stereotypes" (p. 277). Revisioning begins with a critique of exclusionary substratum and hegemonically masculine assumptions within an approach, such as the leadership-followership dynamic. This is exemplified in Valerie's attempt to further an alternative conception of followership by using term "collaboration."

In revisioning, nontraditional values like collaboration are considered equally as important as some traditional values, so theorists could, for example, incorporate connectedness and organization, intuition and reasoning, and masculine and feminine subjectivities within conceptions of leadership and followership. The limiting nature of conceptions, at the research site, of followership and leadership are then challenged by a demarcation of new boundaries—by enlarging, enriching, confounding, and convoluting terms—in ways that reflect an ethic grounded in feminist epistemological and methodological commitments. Through feminist revisioning, we can look anew at phenomena like leadership and followership and refuse to accept the destructive nature of patriarchal approaches that presuppose that value is generated via separation and difference.

Rich (1979) tells us that revisioning is "the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction" (p. 35). Revisioning is essential to the emancipation of oppressed individuals as they re-write their histories and articulate theories that reflect their own lived experiences. A revisioning of followership would stress that followership embodies the search for personal meaning. Ones search for personal meaning holds significance beyond the individual in that followers infuse their work with an embodied essence. This conception of following is transformative in that the communication process seeks to continuously question the very frameworks or schemas that guide our lives. Each evolution in understanding renders past partial illusions and insights meaningless and incorporates worldviews that encompass alternatives that are not entirely individualistic in orientation, and suggests an

overarching theme of community in organizations (Putnam & Kolb, 2000). Through embracing followership, we alter the lives of the people with whom we work—colleagues, students, faculty, staff, and others. In this way, transformation in our own micropractices leads to transformation in the dyadic communication micropractices of others. Our resistance to prevailing (competitive and individualistic) received communicative systems lead to dialectic, ambiguous, ironic, and contradictory forms of resistance by others and a destabilizing of oppressive organizational norms.

A feminist revisioning of followership would necessitate the elimination of self-destructive hierarchical conceptions of leadership and the self-victimizing language associated with followership. Revisioning leadership, management and administration as following would serve to enlarge the circumference of possibility, making language more complex, and repainting a landscape conducive to those whose lived experience is not reflected in cultural stereotypes of leaders; and serve to blur the lines between leadership and followership, masculine and feminine, and individualism and collectivism as evidenced by Patsy's descriptions of efficacious leadership and followership:

> I consider bad leadership as somebody whose motivation is for personal benefit rather than to benefit the organization. When you have the best interest of the organization at heart, you can make mistakes and that doesn't make you a bad leader, but the minute it [prescribed action] is for you—and not for us—whatever you do turns bad.

4.2 Theme two: The role of action in leadership and followership

A feminist revisioning would further necessitate a clarification of the role of action in evaluating leadership and followership. The use of terms like action and doing appear over and over throughout my conversational interviews: Alicia says, "I don't see Fred so he's not my leader. I don't hear Fred uttering original thoughts so he's not my leader;" or Elaine saying, "I think a leader can be both a leader in the traditional sense, literally the first one to lead the charge…and followers literally follow in their draft;" or Eddy's criteria for evaluating leadership and followership, "... [D]o your homework and make sure you can articulate [your] reasoning. I think that bad leaders and bad followers are people that don't have sound reason, can't articulate why..." Thus it seems that in order to be an effective leader or follower one must be perceived as present, action oriented, visionary, intelligent, and articulate. What seems to be lacking in my co-researcher descriptions is a differentiation between good leadership and good followership. How might any member of an organization know what is is qualitatively different in evaluating followership from leadership?

Perhaps we must go back to analyzing the dialectic tensions that help to create, re-create, and differentiate leadership from followership. At this point, it also seems relevant to incorporate standpoint theory into the discussion. As an inductive qualitative researcher who works largely from within an emergent framework I am ethically bound to pursue emergent concepts that are co-constructed with my co-researchers or constructed through reflexive thought. That is to say, I have struggled throughout this study with trying to present a clear view of followership that attends to my feminist ethic

which demands my scholarship focus on experience as central, legitimizing the value of the feminine experience itself. Littlejohn (1999) defines feminine experience: "interdependence and relationship, the legitimacy of emotionality, fusion of public and private realms of experience, egalitarian values, concern for process over product, and openness to multiple ways of seeing and doing" (p. 240).

This commitment places me in the paradox of having to agree with much of what my co-researchers have indicated, while disagreeing and deconstructing their conceptions of leadership and followership, with the hope of presenting a vision of leadership and followership that doesn't attend to the tired command and control/received models of communication. My aim then is to reclaim agency as a socially constructed process that denies objectivist claims (Wolf, 1991), "the conscious and ongoing reproduction of the terms of one's existence while taking responsibility for this process," (DeFrancisco & Palczewski, 2007, pp. 132-133) in hopes of helping marginalized followers to be seen as actors, instead of being those *acted upon* by leaders. All of my co-researchers gave vivid and accurate descriptions of their understandings of followership, and all related, to a greater or lesser degree, their own struggles in accounting for followership independent of leadership.

The results of this research lead me to believe that many of my co-researchers' conceptions of leadership and followership are reflective of Western, individualistic, competitive models that are largely representative of the lived experience of white, heterosexual, European males. These received models of leadership are another way of promoting self via being the most articulate center of attention; in that way leadership is

an acceptable way of differentiating self from the rest of the organization and taking on the male preferred individualistic center stage role. As women have entered the organizational sphere they tend to lead from a quieter, more collective, collaborative, we-centered, more traditionally femininized place of sharing that is rarely recognized as leadership. This approach to leadership focuses directly on the space between "leader" and "follower" in favor of the inter-connected, the inter-dependent, and the inter-relatedness of organizational members. This between-ness model is quite different form models whereby organizational actors continue to position the masculine in domination of the feminine, for that which is presumed to be neutral serves to preserve masculine, patriarchal assumptions about organizations.

4.3 Theme three: The emergent organization

In working through the reflexive process of thematic analysis, I was immediately struck by the fluid, processual, and emergent nature of the leadership and followership dynamic. The narratives of my co-researchers are littered with terms like evolutionary, fluid, and yin-yang type relationship, all of which led me to theorize about the emergent nature of the leadership and followership continuum. While volumes of research exist that attest to the emergent nature of leadership, I have yet to find any that conceives of followership as an emergent process contingent on context and the passage of time. Take this description of Elaine's experience of followership which was more transparent, focused less on status and more on action: "There was a whole structure of people who got the work done." This structure operated independent of hierarchy and was focused on action, she says, rather than empty rhetoric. For example, Elaine stated,

> ...[W]e ignored all of those social niceties. It didn't matter how you were dressed, it didn't matter who you were married to, it didn't matter your education level, it mattered what you brought to the table because...it was more content driven.

Unfortunately, the most common approaches to dealing with the contextual basis of emergent leadership-followership is to adopt an individualistic approach that portrays leadership as the outcome of a perfect match between the leader's character and the situation that he or she confronts. This mode of transactional leadership relies on rational decisions made based on somewhat tangible conditions, which fail to recognize leadership and followership—as social phenomena—are little more, it appears than just a transmission of interpersonal utterances. Instead we must see the emergence of leadership-followership through a discourse oriented approach that paves the way for a novel analysis of the process through which leaders and followers prove capable of content and context defined mutual support and enhancement. Organizational participants must be understood to exist in a symbiotic relationship with no defined boundaries that locate edges of the leadership-followership dynamic. As Valerie states,

> There's such a fluid nature that we don't need to separate the two. We don't need another term for leadership; we just need to start calling it the same thing and talk about what are the commonalities between what we think of as followership and what is already going on with leadership and the common understanding of that.

This sentiment is echoed by Patsy, "Leadership and followership [exist in] a yin-yang relationship, you can't have one without the other. It's a circle. It's not a line and it revolves…"

Leadership-followership communication centers on the process of creating, coordinating, and entering into a symbiotic relationship that defines leader-follower actions according to their mutual support of the mission and vision of the organization. In this regard, the leadership-followership dynamic is unique in its capacity to generate support for and to enhance the extent to which organizational stakeholders are able to promote the collective interest and aspirations of the organization. This perspective necessitates a communicative approach in that socially constructed systems like hierarchy—and its current by-products leadership and followership—can be revisioned through the process of communication, for, human realities are created maintained and transformed in communication (Deetz, 1982).

4.4 Implications for future research

As with any research project, qualitative or otherwise, there are various conclusions to be drawn from this study. Here I offer the precursor of a model for desirable followership conceptualization, suggestions for future research, and a call to action to organizational stakeholders at the research site. The plight of human inquiry research is always having more to write, more to say, and more to explore. In qualitative research specifically, this means that each completed project is always simply the "latest draft." Therefore I assert that the discussion of what followership means is a continuous act of communicative action between ever-changing organizational stakeholders.

The emergent themes co-constructed between my co-researchers and me suggest that a theory may well be the result of this study's theoretical implications. However, I am concerned with producing—yet another—justification for the application of grand narratives, which continue to essentialize the understandings of followership. I am reminded of bell hooks (1994) who says, "It is in the act of having to do things that you don't want to that you learn something about moving past the self. Past the ego" (p. 59); or as Schwandt (2001) suggests, "That substantive theory is essential for making meaning out of or interpreting the data needs little further explanation" (p. 159).

I believe that any further research necessitates a theoretical discussion of organization in Western Culture as an emergent process that is in constant dialectic tension with individualism. We must move away from dichotomous conceptions of leadership and followership and toward a collective process, recognizing necessarily that rather than freeing historically muted groups in organizations, we have to instead mute individualism. This synchronic organizational process deposes hierarchy by setting individualism into dialectic tension with organization, whereby organizational members strive to eliminate the dialectic through a commitment to a collectivistic "we-centered" and "mission centered" approach. The decision making process necessitates an alternative conception of action, as an emergent process where organizational decisions are made according to horizons of affinity as opposed to positional authority. This theory of organization, as process, emerges as soon as we revision hegemonically masculine, sedimented, and linguistic hierarchical structures and their bastard children—leadership and followership. In such an organization, communicative systems like leadership and

followership are necessarily carried away with the tides of change. Action is then revisioned as a non-summative emergent process that takes decision making out of a hierarchical setting, thus valuing non-traditional forms of authority. However, this necessitates a shift from self—as the primary element of society—to the collective. No small task indeed for, "Theory is not inherently healing, liberatory, or revolutionary. It fulfills this function only when we ask that it do so and direct our theorizing to that end" (hooks, 1994, p. 61).

4.5 Call to action

Lest I run off on flights of equitable theoretical fancy, attention must be paid to the here-and-now. As Valerie states, "That's the problem. It is the society we live in…it's cultural. It is so cultural." When we take an integrated view, culture exists in a dialectic tension wherein values affect behavior and behavior affects values; culture is a set of loosely held symbols which are constructed and maintained by a series of attitudes, ideologies, behaviors, and language that are generated from within and outside of the organization (Deetz, 2003). On the basis of dominant communication structures, e.g. leadership and followership, organizational members make sense of shared and unshared values, beliefs, and assumptions. The dominant hegemonic discourses of leadership and followership in contemporary organizations demand strategic solutions that address the situation as it currently exists. Therefore, the remainder of this study will attend to more equitable ways of negotiating followership in organizations.

Leadership is a socially constructed cultural definition, which suggests a specific way of thinking about, categorizing, and treating "subordinate" human beings. It has no

traditional or positivistic scientific basis; rather it is a social construction within U.S. American society that continues to privilege hegemonic forms of masculinity and subjugate alternative subjectivities. It supports an ideology that legitimizes social inequality between groups with different ancestries, national origins, and histories. Systems of power and privilege are then constructed around the concept of leadership, resulting in a systematic and ongoing form of patriarchal sorting. A hierarchy that privileges men, European Americans, heterosexuals, the able-bodied, and middle and upper socio-economic class reinforce these constructions of hegemonic, masculine leader metaphors, myths, and legends in Western organizations. On the basis of these varying levels of privilege, white men create and maintain systems of communication that reflect and reinforce these discursive realities. These dominant communication structures disadvantage organizational members who have not been socialized according to these hegemonically masculine traditions.

This necessitates a break in the myopic proliferation of patriarchal norms in organizations. We must pursue a critique of the notion of a singular and totalizing method of leadership, destabilizing masculine subjectivities in organizations and the ways that institutional structures that are seen as peripheral to organizational life, such as followership, are subjugated. Through this focus on masculine subjectivities, we can develop a more sophisticated, relational, and dialectic understanding of the construction of leadership and followership in organizations. As Goodall and Trethewey (2007) say, "Our task must be to remain vigilant and not succumb to the temptation of 'simple is best' when it comes to explaining leadership [and followership]" (p. 461). Pointedly, we

must stop participating in our own oppression. Calling on the prose of Richardson (2000) yet again, we must commit to a feminist and poststructuralist revisioning that, "...permits—nay, invites—no, incites—us to reflect upon our method[s] and explore new ways of..." understanding followership (p. 929).

In revisioning the process of human organizing, leadership and followership exist in a reciprocally defining communicative relationship. Both leadership and followership are created and reinforced constantly in intersubjective organizational meaning making. These identities are never wholly subjective or objective. They are created in an existential exchange addressing a specific need within an organization and its immediate requirements. From this communicative perspective, one understands transactions or encounters to be the logical structure of human experience, whereby subjective understanding is always achieved intersubjectively. Deetz (1982) clarifies,

> Language is central to this opening of world to experience. Self, other, and world retain their own particular autonomy, but an autonomy only understood in the context of unity. (p. 8)

To quote Margaret Mead (2001),

> If we are to achieve a richer culture, rich in contrasting values, we must recognize the whole gamut of human potentialities, and so weave a less arbitrary social fabric, one in which each diverse human gift will find a fitting place. (p. 245)

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Appendix

IRB # 07-64

Reviewed Exempt
October 12, 2007

Informed Consent Form

Who is in Charge Here? A Feminist Communicology of Followership and Leadership in an Academic Organization

Dear Research Participant:

You are being asked to take part in a research study about the role of followership in organization. The goal of this study is to learn two things: 1. what role do metaphors of leadership play in defining followership; and 2. how do gendered norms of leadership affect your understanding of followership? You are being asked to take part in this study based on your experience working as a leader and follower in the workplace. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before you agree to be in my study.

If you decide to take part, you will be interviewed by me. It should take one hour, and will be scheduled when you are available. I will record our interview. The data collected from all of my interviews will be used in my thesis research.

I do not expect any risk for you, but if you do not feel comfortable with the research topic, you should refuse to be in the study. You may gain from this study by having a chance explore how followership affects you at work. Taking part in this study is voluntary, and you may change your mind at any time.

I will not reveal your real name, and I will keep your answers to my questions private. This study could be used in reports and scholarly papers, but you will never be named. The audio taping of our interview and the written notes from it will be kept for five years in secure storage at the UAF Department of Communication, and no one will be allowed to view them except the Chair of the Department of Communication.

If you have any questions now, I will answer them. If you have questions later, you may contact me (474-1876 or fnrlj@uaf.edu) or Dr. Pamela McWherter (474-7405 or ffprm@uaf.edu). If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject, please contact the Research Coordinator in the Office of Research Integrity at 474-7800 (Fairbanks area) or 1-866-876-7800 (outside Fairbanks area) or fyirb@uaf.edu.

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been provided a copy of this form.