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What does it mean to follow? An exploration of a followership profile in hospitality and tourism

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ABSTRACT

Although leadership has received considerable attention from many scholars, much less research has focused on those who follow leaders; yet, followers contribute much to the success of an organization. This study explored the followership profiles of stakeholders in hospitality and tourism education. The findings summarize the followership dimensions of a sample of hospitality students, educators, and industry professionals. For each of the five followership dimensions the mean scores for industry professionals were rated higher when compared with students and educators, with courage to participate in transformation being the highest rated among all three groups. Implications for hospitality education are presented.

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Followership; hospitality; education; industry

Introduction

Leadership has been studied by many scholars throughout the last few decades; however, not nearly as much attention has been given to research that focuses on those who follow leaders, or on what has come to be known as followership (Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson, & Morris, 2006; Brum & Drury, 2013; Kang, Heo, & Kim, 2015; Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carstend, 2014). Yet, followership is seen as necessary for group coordination (Van Vugt, 2009) and is critical to every level of an organization (Bjugstad et al., 2006). Effective followership is seen as critical for organizations regarding the relationship between employers and employees. Followership can be defined as the process that develops between leaders and followers, such that followers work with leaders to accomplish common goals while exhibiting teamwork and developing interconnections (Colangelo, 2000; Kelley, 1992). Furthermore, while followership is important in all types of organizations and operations, it is particularly critical in hospitality operations where customer service is essential and teams of employees work to create and serve food, maintain lodging operations 24 hours a day, and plan and deliver events in a timely, satisfactory manner. Understanding more about the followership characteristics of stakeholders in hospitality education is critical for increasing the body of knowledge

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concerning the roles followership does and could play in hospitality operations and education.

Therefore, this research investigates followership in the discipline of hospitality and tourism. The purpose of this exploratory study is to understand the followership of hospitality and tourism students, educators, and industry professionals by exploring their personal followership attributes.

Literature review

Background and historical context

Although today leadership is primarily viewed as a process, over half a century ago, scholars proposed the trait theory of leadership (Mann, 1959; Stogdill, 1948). Yet, in spite of the focus on traits in leadership research, no single trait or set of traits was found to characterize leaders. Soon behavioral leadership theories emerged (Blake & Mouton, 1964), as did situational leadership theories such as those that concentrate on the context of leaders and their interactions with followers (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988). Kouzes and Posner (2006) in their well-known work on leadership assert that leadership is not about personality, but about observable behaviors. They developed their instruments, the Leadership Practices Inventory (LPI) and the Student LPI, to help people assess their own leadership through five core practices that include the following: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2006). Given the various theories of leadership, it can be defined in numerous ways. However, a straightforward, general definition is one proposed by Van Vugt (2006) and based on the work of others (Bass & Stogdill, 1990; Hollander, 1985) whereby leadership is broadly defined as “a process of influence to attain mutual goals” (p. 355).

In addition to the transactional-transformational view of leadership studied by many (e.g., Aldoory & Toth, 2004; Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003; Avolio, Bass, & Jung, 1999; Bass, 1985, 1991, 1996; Bass & Avolio, 1994, 1995, 1997; Howell & Avolio, 1993; Lowe, Kroeck, & Sivasubramaniam, 1996), the leader–member exchange (LMX) theory (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975) has proposed that successful leadership results from the type of relationship between leader and follower and the quality of this relationship is established by the interactions between leader and follower (Graen & Scandura, 1987; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Still another emerging path is that of servant leadership whereby a leader is motivated by service itself through a wish to serve and empower followers (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006; Farling, Stone, & Winston, 1999; Russell, 2001). Arguably, understanding each view of leadership helps the manager, leader, or owner of a business interact with his or her employees throughout the daily activities of conducting business.

However, despite the recent emphasis on the leadership process rather than the old-fashioned trait approach to the concepts and practices of leadership, some scholars think that attention has often focused so much on leaders and leadership that people forget that there are not leaders unless there are followers (Kellerman, 2008, 2012; Kelley, 1992). Furthermore, while many people know their leadership style, they often do not know their followership style (Colangelo, 2000), which can be helpful for students

to identify and understand early in their education so that they may adapt and work with the implications.

The concept of followership

Although followership has received limited attention in the literature when compared with leadership, the concept has been studied by a few scholars over the last couple of decades (i.e., Chaleff, 1995, 2008; Hollander, 2007; Kellerman, 2008; Kelley, 1988, 1992). However, just what is followership? A simple yet useful definition of followership proposed by Baker and Denis (2011), and based on work by Baker and Gerlowski (2007), proposes that “a follower is defined as an active, participative role in which a person willingly supports the teachings or views of a leader and consciously and deliberately works towards goals held in common with the leader and/or organization” (p. 342). In addition, several scholars suggest that followership is an experiential requirement of leadership and followership is needed for effective leadership (Agho, 2009; Crossman & Crossman, 2011; Rost, 1995) and, in fact, followership has been termed “upward leadership” (Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010).

Other scholars, including Chaleff (1995, 2008), Hollander (2012), and Kellerman (2008, 2012), have sought to offer meaningful ways to understand followership. Chaleff (1995, 2008) suggested that powerful followers support powerful leaders with very little hierarchy, while Hollander (2012) contended that one must consider a comprehensive view of the leadership and followership process. Kellerman (2008) proposed that followership is a mutual association and reaction between subordinates and superiors. Each offers additional insight and support for a more comprehensive understanding of followership. Furthermore, both Chaleff (1995, 2008) and Kellerman (2008) have asserted that the behaviors of followers are vitally important to the achievements of leaders, with Chaleff (1995, 2008) identifying the following five qualities of followership: the courage to assume responsibility, the courage to serve, the courage to challenge, the courage to participate in personal and organizational transformation, and the courage to take moral action. Each of the five qualities influences organizations from both employees’ and managers’ perspectives and has the potential to improve operations and customer relations.

Leadership and followership can both be vital in the management of hospitality and tourism operations. Therefore, the concept of followership should be understood by hospitality and tourism educators, students, and industry stakeholders as followership directly relates to employees. Kelley (1992), as a pioneer of followership examination, found through his study of leaders and followers that leaders provided, on average, no more than 20% to the success of most organizations. Followers were essential to the remaining 80% of success in an organization, and most employees, regardless of their role or title, spent more time as followers than as leaders (Kelley, 1992). Blanchard, Welbourne, Gilmore, and Bullock (2009) sought to validate Kelley’s scale (1992) and found that independent critical thinking and active engagement played major roles in the work lives of employees. For students, given the potential time that they will spend as an employee, as both a follower and a leader, followership may be beneficial to study along with leadership in undergraduate programs.

Followership and culture

The literature on followership reviewed thus far has had a North American focus. However, Robert Kellerman (2008, p. 10), an important pioneer in the study of followership, notes that different cultural “perspectives will likely produce different approaches to followership,” and “followership is also influenced at the subcultural level,” such as the differences seen between military personnel and civilians with regard to followership. For example, in a small-scale study that looked at both culture and subculture, Montesino (2003) found differences with regard to followership and leadership between employees working in their home country of the Dominican Republic versus those working in the United States. A classic example of differences in leader–follower behaviors based on culture has been in the investigation of commercial jet pilot behaviors whereby researchers found that U.S. pilots tended to act alone whereas those from Asian countries worked in teams, yet open and honest communication in the flight cockpit does not appear to be easy (Merriti & Helmreich, 1996). Understanding these differences is of ongoing importance for reducing accidents in aviation and for understanding cross-cultural leadership and followership practices. However, studies on these potential differences are limited and therefore further study is needed to identify and understand differences in both leadership and followership across and between cultures. Furthermore, culture not only manifests itself in the workplace, it is seen in cultural differences among learners with regard to leadership and followership education (Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2009).

Followership in practice

Recently, Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, and Carsten (2014, p. 83) noted that, “It is accepted wisdom that there is no leadership without followers, yet followers are very often left out of the leadership research equation.” In their review of followership research, Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) presented two theoretical frameworks for understanding the scholarship of followership, identifying one as a role-based method (“reversing the lens”) and the other as a constructionist method (“the leadership process”). The authors suggested that effective followers also appear to share characteristics common to good leaders. Others have asserted that followers are essential to leadership practices (Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2001), and several scholars contend that excellent, brave followers are a prerequisite for successful organizations (e.g., Chaleff, 2003; Kelley, 1992, 2004; Lundin & Lancaster, 1990; Potter, Rosenbach, & Pittman, 2001; Raelin, 2003; Rosenau, 2004; Seteroff, 2003). These scholars support the idea that in the current work environment involving extensive team efforts, shared leadership and effective followership have never been more essential. Thus, if followership, along with leadership, is essential to business practices, then instead of ignoring followership in education, perhaps followership is also essential in concept and practice for students to understand and be able to apply.

In addition, while some scholars hold the view that followership is an outdated concept and believe that it is degrading to those who go along with the decisions and actions of the leader (Heifetz, 2007; Rost, 2008), others have continued to pursue a greater understanding of the concepts and practices of followership (Bjugstad et al., 2006; Blanchard et al., 2009; Brum & Drury, 2013; Carsten et al., 2010; Dixon, 2003, 2009).

Several scholars have posited that research should focus more on followership as an integral part of leadership (Crossman & Crossman, 2011; Kelley, 2008; Sy, 2010). In fact, some researchers have developed scales to identify and measure followership behaviors (e.g., Dixon, 2003; Sy, 2010). For example, based on Chaleff's work (1995), Dixon (2003) conducted an empirical investigation into the measurement of followership and found that follower behaviors could be measured and are discernible at all levels of an organization.

In additional research, Dixon and Westbrook (2003) asserted the importance of followership in the information age and proposed a leader–follower model with followership as part of the leadership development process, further noting that leaders are also followers (Dixon, 2009). And, in more recent work, Dixon, Mercado, and Knowles (2013) found that differences occur between generations in terms of followership and engagement or commitment behaviors, a concept also supported through conceptual work by Chou (2012). Employees in technical occupations demonstrate more association with follower behaviors and not as much association with commitment levels, while employees in non-technical occupations exhibit a reduced level of association with follower behaviors and more association with commitment levels across generations (Dixon et al., 2013).

In this dynamic world where technology is used increasingly and continues to change and enhance people's abilities to communicate quickly and in ever-changing ways, followership may also be more important (Kellerman, 2008, 2012). Suggestions have been made for paying closer attention to the functions and roles of followers, particularly because leaders have become weaker and followers stronger, with technology playing a huge and ever growing part in the process. Kellerman (2008, 2012) has advocated for learning about followership and contextual knowledge when one is learning how to lead, noting that this is a paradigm shift in leadership education and the leadership industry, the 35% of the \$70 billion sector of corporate training spent on management and leadership training (Zimmerman, 2015). In addition, some work indicates that leaders' influences on followers' identities are perhaps more complex than previously thought and therefore future studies of leadership need to foster a deeper understanding of how followers interact with leaders (Carsten et al., 2010; Collinson, 2005, 2006).

Followership in hospitality and tourism

While research on followership is not as common as research on leadership, research on followership in the hospitality and tourism industry is even rarer. Few studies have focused on the concepts or practices of followership in the industry or in hospitality and tourism education. Examples include the following qualitative studies: Wang and Cameron (2012) proposed a qualitative study of those working in the hospitality and tourism industry because so little is known about this subject, Schindler (2012) conducted a qualitative doctoral study of the perceptions of followership held by hospitality managers, and Haven-Tang and Jones (2012) used a case-study approach to look at leadership and followership in rural tourism, noting the importance of follower self-direction and active engagement. However, few empirical studies can be found in the literature. One of the few quantitative studies involving followership in the hospitality

industry was conducted by Kang et al. (2015), and in their research on employees at luxury hotels they found that effective followership helped to reduce job “burnout.” The findings from the study by Kang et al. (2015) are interesting, but limited to a small segment of the hospitality industry, and the attributes of followership focused on critical thinking, proactive participation, and team spirit, and more remains to be learned about followership in the industry. Hospitality is a service-oriented industry that is highly dependent on staff members who need to be trained and knowledgeable about brand standards and practices to meet and exceed guest expectations in a consistent manner (Cai & Hobson, 2004). Learning more about followership is relevant for understanding the dynamics of the hospitality and tourism workplace, and its related education. Yet, followership education has been rarely studied in general or in the hospitality and tourism discipline.

Followership and education

While leadership education has been the focus of much attention in higher education (e.g., Bridges & Hallinger, 1996; Brungardt, 1997; Posner, 2004; Rost & Barker, 2000), little attention has been paid to followership education. Negative connotations have been given to the term followership and the language used appears to make a difference in the focus of education (Hoption, 2014; Kelley, 2008). A few scholars have made recommendations for followership education such as teaching creativity to help engage learners further with imaginative, dynamic engagement as followers (Baublits, 2014) and involving students in case-study exercises on active followership to assist them in appreciating and understanding followership (Hoption, 2014). In spite of the importance of leader–follower relationships and interactions in the hospitality industry and the indication that understanding followership in the hospitality workplace is critical (e.g., Saunders, 2004; Testa, 2000), little work has investigated this concept in hospitality and tourism education. Arguably, the linkage between leadership and followership provides the potential context for hospitality and tourism educators to focus on both concepts in the classroom. Therefore, attention needs to be paid to followership and more needs to be known about its role in general and in hospitality and tourism, especially in hospitality and tourism education, where academicians are charged with educating the industry leaders of tomorrow.

Thus, the question that guided this exploratory research was focused on the following:

What are the followership attributes of hospitality and tourism students, educators, and industry professionals?

Methods

A survey was used in this study to investigate the research question. The survey comprised several closed-ended items that were used to gather further insights into respondents’ followership attributes. Additional demographic questions and a few open-response questions were added by the researchers to the finalized questionnaire. The survey method permitted the researchers to learn about the characteristics of different

stakeholders in a relatively accessible manner. The rationale for this research design was that the survey method allowed the researchers to use a scale developed and validated through previous research by Dixon (2003) to determine various stakeholders' followership characteristics. The *Followership Profile* created by Dixon (2003) was developed using Chaleff's (1995, 2003) five dimensions of courageous followers. These five dimensions include: (1) the *courage to assume responsibility*, (2) the *courage to serve*, (3) the *courage to challenge*, (4) the *courage to participate in transformation*, and (5) the *courage to take moral action*. Examples of the statements on the profile that make up each dimension are shown in Table 1. In addition, the creator of the scale gave the authors permission to use the instrument (Dixon, 2003). To establish operational validity of the scale, Dixon (2003) used three different validation processes. These included content validation, criterion validation, and face validation. Furthermore, the statistical measure of the reliability of the instrument was determined to have a high correlation of internal consistency. Using the Spearman-Brown prophecy formula to establish the split-half reliability of the instrument, Dixon (2003) determined that the coefficient of the instrument was 0.963.

There were multiple items per factor. The authors included all items used by Dixon (2003). These included 20 questions for courage to assume responsibility, 10 for courage to serve, 7 for courage to challenge and courage to participation in transformation, and 12 for courage to take moral action. Dixon (2003) indicated the difference in the number of statements was due to the proportions each dimension holds within the *Followership Profile* – i.e., the dimensions are not, and should not be considered, equal contributors to an individual's overall followership profile.

The sample included students, educators, and industry professionals involved in hospitality and tourism, for they are all stakeholders in the discipline. Additionally,

Table 1. Definitions and example statements of the five dimensions of courageous followership from the Followership Profile.

The Courage to Assume Responsibility – “followers take responsibility for themselves and the organization by demonstrating a sense of ownership”

I am passionate about work and commitments.
I demonstrate appreciation and support for the group values and traditions.
I manage myself to meet deadlines and commitments.

The Courage to Serve – “followers assume new or additional responsibilities to unburden the leader and serve the organization” and “present factual information without overstating the case” in order to “enhance the communication process”

I give feedback to my supervisor on policies.
I tell others my supervisor's values without injecting my own personal agenda.
I help my supervisor clarify the vision and goals.

The Courage to Challenge – “followers are willing to risk rejection or to initiate confrontation in order to examine the actions of the leader and group” and they “value harmony but not at the expense of the common purpose or integrity”

I command respect.
I give my supervisor feedback on behaviors.
I confront the danger of not considering alternative ideas

The Courage to Participate in Transformation – “followers recognize the need for transformation and champion the need for change”

I create a supportive environment in which changes can occur.
I notice and acknowledge improvements.
I provide support for experimentation and learning.

The Courage to Take Moral Action – “followers who will stand up for prosocial values and mission” and “are prepared to move on if moving on is appropriate”

I act responsibly.
I advise my supervisor of concern for threatened personal values and principles.
I prepare to transfer responsibilities should firing or layoff become necessary.

Source: Dixon (2003).

each group could offer a unique perspective on followership and depending on the results of the study would be in a unique position to either understand or use the followership concepts in their position. Student participants in the study were those in the researchers' courses and other faculty members' classes (200 students were asked to participate). The student sample comprised students at five different U.S. universities, covering different geographical areas, offering hospitality management, with one U.S. university offering a tourism management degree. Students varied across all undergraduate levels (first year through senior year). The faculty and industry samples were gathered from the membership of an international association of industry professionals and educators of which the researchers are members and for which they had access to the membership list (the list comprised 3000 educators and industry professionals at the time of the study). The survey was completed using the Qualtrics survey software system (Qualtrics, Provo, UT) and distributed through an email link. Data were analyzed via SPSS (IBM Corp, Armonk, NY) with MANOVA used to determine differences between respondent groups. The researchers used one-way ANOVA and descriptive statistics to examine differences between individual dimensions.

Results and discussion

Respondents were from three different groups, including hospitality undergraduate students ($n = 89$), hospitality faculty members ($n = 72$), and hospitality industry professionals ($n = 45$). Demographic information for each respondent group is reported in Table 2. Students in the sample were primarily female (67.4%), while faculty and industry

Table 2. Demographics of hospitality undergraduate students, faculty, and industry professionals.

Demographic	Students		Faculty		Industry	
	n	% ^a	n	% ^a	n	% ^a
<i>Respondents^b</i>	89	43.2	72	35.0	45	21.8
<i>Sex</i>						
Male	26	29.2	38	52.8	27	60.0
Female	60	67.4	32	44.4	17	37.8
<i>Age</i>						
20 or less years	34	38.2	0	0.0	0	0.0
21–30 years	48	53.9	1	1.4	10	22.2
31–40 years	3	3.4	11	15.3	5	11.1
41–50 years	1	1.1	24	33.3	14	31.1
51–60 years	0	0.0	18	25.0	10	22.2
60 or more years	0	0.0	15	20.8	5	11.1
<i>Ethnicity/race</i>						
White	69	77.5	54	75.0	40	88.9
Hispanic or Latino	2	2.2	2	2.8	1	2.2
Black or African American	9	10.1	3	4.2	1	2.2
Asian /Pacific Islander	4	4.5	9	12.5	1	2.2
Other	2	2.2	0	0.0	1	2.2
<i>Years' experience in the hospitality industry</i>						
None	13	14.6	2	2.8	0	0.0
Less than 1 year	14	15.7	0	0.0	0	0.0
1 or more but less than 3	27	30.3	5	6.9	1	2.2
3 or more but less than 5	21	23.6	5	6.9	4	8.9
5 or more but less than 10	9	10.1	16	22.2	8	17.8
10 years or more	1	1.1	41	56.9	31	68.9

^aPercentages may total under 100% due to non-response.

^bPercentages for respondents based on total sample.

professional respondents had a larger percentage of males (52.8% and 60.0% respectively). A lower percentage of respondents identified an ethnicity other than white in the hospitality industry (8.8%) than in the student (19%) or faculty groups (19.5%).

At the time of the survey, 14.6% of the students had no hospitality work experience. The survey was distributed to all levels of undergraduate students, and therefore the student respondents could have been in their first year of post-secondary education, prior to any work experience or internship component of their program. Over half of the faculty members (56.9%) had 10 or more years of industry experience, while only 2.8% had no hospitality experience. The industry professionals in the sample all had at least one year of work experience in the hospitality industry with over two-thirds (68.9%) having 10 or more years of experience.

As suggested by the original author (Dixon, 2003), the followership scores for each of the five dimensions were calculated using a simple average of all items within each dimension. The researchers ran a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) to determine whether differences existed in followership scores based on the three different groups (undergraduate students, faculty members, and industry professionals). Box's test of equality of covariance matrices was not significant ($p = 0.453$) and so a homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices is present in the data. In addition, Lavene's Test of Homogeneity of Variance indicated that there was a homogeneity of variances for all variables ($p > 0.05$). There was a statistically significant difference between the three respondent groups with the combined dependent variables, $F(10, 392) = 3.465$, $p < 0.001$; Wilks's $\Lambda = 0.844$. Follow-up univariate ANOVAs indicated there were statistically significant differences in all dimensions of followership, including *courage to assume responsibility* ($F(2,200) = 1.078$, $p = 0.001$), *courage to serve* ($F(2,200) = 1.747$, $p = 0.004$), *courage to challenge* ($F(2,200) = 1.417$, $p = 0.005$), *courage to participate in transformation* ($F(2,200) = 1.574$, $p < 0.001$), and *courage to take moral action* ($F(2,200) = 0.910$, $p = .0007$).

The mean score for each of the five dimensions of courageous followers that comprise the *Followership Profile* (including the *courage to assume responsibility*, the *courage to serve*, the *courage to challenge*, the *courage to participate in transformation*, and the *courage to take moral action* (Chaleff, 2008, 2003; Dixon, 2003), was examined for the three respondent groups (see Table 3). In all but one case (*courage to serve*), the students scored the lowest in each dimension and the industry professionals scored the highest. For the *courage to serve* dimension, the faculty respondents scored the lowest (3.76) and the industry professionals scored the highest (4.09).

The *courage to participate in transformation* dimension was rated the highest among all three groups. Chaleff (2003) included personal and organizational transformation in the *courage to participate in transformation* dimension. In all three groups, personal

Table 3. Mean follower score (standard deviation) by respondent group.

Courage to...	Students	Faculty	Industry
Assume responsibility	3.98 (0.41)	4.05 (0.39)	4.25 (0.37)
Serve	3.79 (0.58)	3.76 (0.55)	4.09 (0.51)
Challenge	3.84 (0.54)	3.92 (0.46)	4.15 (0.53)
Participate in transformation	4.04 (0.43)	4.25 (0.40)	4.35 (0.44)
Take moral action	3.87 (0.43)	3.90 (0.43)	4.11 (0.40)

Five-point Likert-scale with 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree.

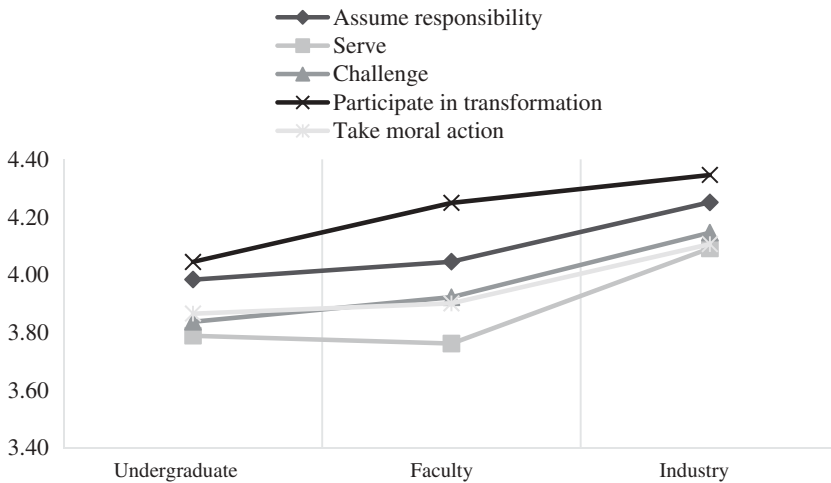


Figure 1. Plotted means of the five followership dimensions of courageous followership from the Followership Profile by respondent group.

transformation is likely to be important and encouraged for students, for faculty members, and for working professionals in the industry. However, students are likely to feel the least power in organizational transformation and those with over 10 years in the industry (68.9% of sample) are likely to have some power to participate in organizational transformation. In higher education, faculty members do frequently serve a role in institutional governance, but the *courage to participate* could be influenced by other factors such as their non-tenured versus tenured status. Further visual representation of the means for all three groups is provided in [Figure 1](#).

The *courage to take responsibility* was the second highest dimension, with the mean for students at just under 4 (agree) and faculty and industry professionals averaging “agree” or higher. It was not surprising that industry professionals had this dimension as the highest (4.25) because those in the hospitality and tourism industry tend to have a greater responsibility to the organization’s stakeholders, particularly to stockholders or owners in for-profit hospitality organizations. Industry professionals at higher levels are responsible for the financial well-being of an organization and without the *courage to take responsibility* they may become unable to make the difficult decisions needed.

The *courage to take moral action* and the *courage to challenge* had similar scores across all three groups. Both of these dimensions may require followers to confront their leaders if they are not being consistent or fair (*courage to challenge*) or intervene or move on when an organization or leader no longer fits with the follower’s principles or beliefs (*courage to take moral action*) (Dixon, 2009). Dixon (2003) argued those who are more dependent on the financial incentives of staying in a position have lower *courage to take moral action* scores, which could explain the lower score for students. Again, perhaps because the industry professionals had significant experience in the industry, they are possibly in a better position to take moral action or challenge the processes of their organization.

The *courage to serve* was the lowest rated dimension by all three groups, but was still over 4 for the industry professionals. Dixon (2003) indicated that the *courage to serve*

might be higher when there are more people counting on the performance or followership of an individual; in the hospitality industry, this could include customers, employees, supervisors, owners, or even governmental agencies. On the other hand, students and faculty members still scored on the “agree” end of the Likert scale, just not as high as the industry group, and perhaps this is explained by fewer high-level stakeholders, particularly owners.

This initial profile of the followership of hospitality and tourism students, educators, and industry professionals provides a foundation for the followership attributes of these groups. As noted in the literature, the concept of followership is still somewhat controversial and most of the research focuses on leadership in its various forms and not on those who follow. Although more needs to be learned about the characteristics and experiences of followership of students, faculty members, and industry professionals, this exploratory study helps to provide some initial information regarding their followership attributes. Additionally, this study can help to provide a foundation so that more studies of followership and its associated practices can be undertaken and used by hospitality and tourism stakeholders.

Implications and conclusions

Implications for educators

The results of this exploratory study have implications for educators. Although further studies are needed to confirm the results, the findings provide some evidence to help direct educational efforts in the area of followership. Given that the students have less industry and life experience than the industry professionals and faculty members surveyed, it was not surprising that the students scored lower on the followership attributes, with the exception of the *courage to serve*. Also, although faculty members have more opportunities to engage in effective followership behaviors than students, arguably industry professionals have even more opportunities and therefore it was not surprising that they scored higher on the attributes than the other two groups. In addition, the industry professionals in the sample were managers with significant responsibilities within their organizations and, thus, they perhaps have more opportunities than faculty members and students do to lead as well as follow, and as Dixon and Westbrook (2003, p. 22) noted in their article titled “Followership Revealed,” “evidently, organizational leaders are good followers.” Consequently, providing students with opportunities to lead as well as follow appears to be important for their development, and perhaps offering instructors more opportunities to engage in leadership experiences would assist them in developing their followership profile further as well. Effective followership is often seen as necessary for good leadership, and it has been noted that a leader needs to consider how to keep good followers through practices such as “demonstrating appreciation by practicing good listening when challenged, accepting constructive criticism, promoting penalty free risk taking without denigrating the rights and passages of responsibility – good and bad” (Dixon & Westbrook, 2003, p. 25). Therefore, given the results of this study, it would be good to think about leaders and followers and develop the capacities for both in students and faculty members through

experiences that allow them to experience the five dimensions of followership in well-planned, innovative learning and teaching environments.

Suggestions for followership education include a variety of activities. One is to ensure that students participate in group experiences such as group projects and in student organizations in which they become highly engaged. The industry professionals surveyed scored highest on the *courage to serve* attribute and, again, this is not surprising given the opportunities that hospitality and tourism professionals have to serve others in their capacities as managers and leaders in the field. However, this finding suggests that both students and faculty members could benefit from increased opportunities to develop their *courage to serve*, and this goes along with the recommendation above to provide students experiences that allow them to engage in teamwork to work toward common goals.

Also, although Dixon (2009) did not find differences hierarchically between different levels of employees in terms of their *courage to participate in transformation*, in this study industry professionals scored highest on all dimensions, including that one. Given current societal issues and trends, it is perhaps not surprising that all groups scored highest on this dimension, but, once again, perhaps the industry professionals had more opportunities to practice the attribute in their professional roles. Therefore, providing students with safe environments, in terms of risk and vulnerability, could help them to build on their ways to promote the need for change and would help them to enhance their own followership qualities regarding transformation.

Students in hospitality and tourism courses could also complete the *Followership Profile* (Dixon, 2003) themselves to learn more about their own followership characteristics, and the results could serve as a basis for discussion and further study of the topic. Several respondents to the survey used in this study noted that they had never heard of the term followership or even considered that followers are important and thus, as one educator recommends, educators could begin lessons about followership with key questions for students about what followership is and how it is viewed. Following such introductory discussions, an instructor could then provide definitions and discuss the importance of the positive attributes and dimensions of followership in organizations that have been studied in the literature (Raffo, 2013). Following an introduction to followership, case studies on effective followership could be beneficial, and numerous case studies could be developed regarding effective followership in the hospitality and tourism industry (Hopton, 2014).

Hopton (2014) created a lesson plan for followership in a business management classroom, which an educator may be able to adapt to a hospitality or tourism classroom focusing on leadership or management skill development. An additional consideration of followership could be helpful in the set-up and reflection on internship experiences for hospitality students, and attention to the concepts and practices of effective followership could be beneficial for internship supervisors and mentors as well as the students themselves. Finally, students could conduct self-reflections, spending time thinking, writing, and talking about their own followership characteristics and experiences and developing followership plans for their future educational and industry careers.

Conclusions

This exploratory study provided insights into the followership attributes of students, faculty members, and industry professionals in the hospitality and tourism industry. The results can help faculty members and administrators begin to make better-informed decisions about possibly incorporating followership into hospitality and tourism education. Perhaps with some focused inclusion of the concepts and practices of followership throughout the hospitality and tourism curriculum students can become better prepared for their initial jobs in the industry and further understand their employees and themselves as they move through their management careers. Multiple business educators advise that followership education should be combined with leadership studies or management and leadership development courses, recommending that the concepts be added to coursework in both undergraduate and graduate programs (e.g., Baublits, 2014; Hopton, 2014; Raffo, 2013).

Many universities concentrate on leadership education, with little attention given to how students can be effective followers, and yet in numerous fields, and in hospitality and tourism in particular, being an effective follower is important for achieving the service-oriented goals of many operations. In hospitality operations it is often important for followers to work independently of their leaders to carry out important tasks. As Chaleff (2003) noted, it is important for followers to take on a variety of different roles that take courage, including having the courage to engage in two different behaviors, the courage to support the leader, and the courage to challenge the leader's behaviors and policies as needed. Chaleff (2003) also noted that there are different types of followers, including what he calls the resource, the individualist, the implementer, and the partner, and in his work he focused on the fact that effective followers both support and challenge their leaders. With the notable evidence of the importance of followership, hospitality and tourism educators need to begin to work on integrating the concepts and practices of followership into their students' leadership education. Perhaps given the importance of followership in the hospitality industry, hospitality and tourism educators should consider including followership in a purposeful way rather than as an add-on to traditional leadership education.

The results of this research may help those involved in hospitality and tourism education to heighten their awareness of followership and perhaps understand more about it. Not surprisingly, followership differed between students, industry professionals, and faculty members. However, incorporating followership into training and education in intentional, purposeful ways could assist students and ultimately the future of operations in hospitality and tourism.

Limitations and suggestions for further research

This exploratory study provides a foundation on followership and support for followership in the classroom along with key implications for educators, but it is not without limitations. The students, faculty members, and industry professionals who responded to the survey could have held stronger feelings about followership than others, or they may have known the researchers by name and those issues may have influenced their answers. The faculty and industry stakeholders who responded belonged to one group and other sampling structures could lead to different results. A larger, more diverse

sample might provide more representative responses and therefore be more generalizable. As noted, the students in the sample were predominantly female while the faculty members and industry professionals surveyed had a larger percentage of males (52.8% and 60.0% respectively) and most of the respondents identified themselves as Caucasian and therefore further research needs to be conducted to determine whether differences occur in followership attributes based on gender, race, ethnicity, or other demographic characteristics. In addition, the topic of the survey was unknown to several respondents based on their note to the researchers that they had never heard of the term followership prior to receiving the link to the survey and perhaps this lack of knowledge of the survey's subject matter led to a low response rate.

Since this study only profiled the followership attributes of a small sample of these stakeholder groups (students, educators, and industry professionals), further research studies are needed to examine followership in the hospitality and tourism industry and its related education. These studies are necessary to explore followership within multiple demographic groups, professional industry segments (i.e., restaurants, lodging, and events), across and between cultures, and via a variety of methods in training and education. Additional studies are also needed to determine effective followership behaviors that are particularly important in hospitality and tourism, for people are often both followers and leaders in their careers, and both are important for their continued success.

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