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How Doctoral Students in a Formal Leadership Program Conceptualize Followership: A Mixed-Methods Study

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by

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Abstract

The purpose of this exploratory mixed-methods study was to determine how doctoral students in a formal leadership program conceptualize followership. The methods used to conduct this analysis included distributing a Qualtrics (released in August 2022) survey and conducting one-on-one interviews with a sample of degree-seeking doctoral students within a formal leadership program. The researcher collected quantitative and qualitative data addressing students' followership style, leadership attitudes and beliefs, and perceptions of followership. These data were analyzed concurrently using a triangulation design. A total of 67 students completed the survey, and seven students were interviewed. The findings revealed that the participants employ an exemplary followership style, exercise systemic thinking, and hold a prototypic *and* antiprototypic view of followers. As followers, the participants described themselves as actively supporting the leader, organization, and team while taking the initiative to go above and beyond in problem-solving and executing their roles. Further, they emphasized the importance of developing rapport with their leader(s) and colleagues because they view leadership as a collective process that is relationship oriented. Moreover, they believe they add value to that process regardless of the role they hold. Although their perceptions of followership encompass a continuum of negative and positive follower attributes, they assume that most followers are proactive and interactive in their work with the leader(s) and members of the organization.

Keywords: follower, followership, leadership, higher education, mixed-methods

Dedication

I dedicate this work to the matriarchs of my family. To my mom, who, as a young parent of twins, knew the value of pursuing a college degree. Thank you for letting us watch, learn---and color from the back of the class. Your zest for life is contagious, and I am so glad to have caught it. To my Grandma June, you have another doctor in the family! You were my lodestar, and I know you would have been so proud to share in this achievement. You are truly missed.

Acknowledgments

An old Hindu proverb asserted— “There is nothing noble about being superior to some other [person]. The true nobility is in being superior to your previous self.” This program has been just that. It has been a process of becoming. Not just becoming a doctor but being pushed, pulled, and sometimes carried into becoming my better self. For that, I am forever grateful.

This has not been a solo journey; I have received tremendous support throughout the pursuit of my Ed.D. at Minnesota State University Moorhead (MSUM). First and foremost, a heartfelt thank you to my dissertation chair, Dr. Boyd Bradbury, for your unwavering support and attention to detail throughout the dissertation process. Your humor, expertise, and insights were invaluable. Second, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my dissertation committee; Dr. Tracy Wright, Dr. Julie Swaggert, and Dr. Thomas Reburn. Your feedback, assurance, and persistent drive made this feat not only possible but attainable. Third, thank you to members of my cohort for the sweat and tears you gave toward this experience together.

Finally, I would like to thank my family. My parents, Janna and Marc, for your constant love and support --- you are indeed my biggest fans. To my grandparents, June and Leonard, for instilling a lifelong love for learning and the power of education. I miss you both dearly. To my sister, Kari, for always pushing me to be my best self. To my wife, Megan, for paving the way. I couldn’t imagine a better partner to have throughout this journey. You endured long hours (and many miles), helping me wrap my brain around the complexities of followership. Without such a team beside me, I doubt I would be in this place today.

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Nomenclature and Abbreviations

FIFT Followers Implicit Followership Theory

HT Hierarchical Thinking

IFT Implicit Followership Theory

ILT Implicit Leadership Theory

IRB Institutional Review Board

KFQ Kelley Followership Questionnaire

LABS Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Scale

LIFT Leaders Implicit Followership Theory

LMX Leader-Member Exchange

SPSS Statistical Packet for the Social Sciences

ST Systemic Thinking

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

As students make their way through their collegiate experience, they will inevitably encounter some level of leadership training. In fact, most colleges and universities have embedded leadership within their majors or have developed specific leadership degree programs (Foley, 2013; 2015; Kellerman, 2018a; 2018b; Nohria & Khurana, 2010). However, the delivery is typically leader-centric and omits the power and influence of the follower (Dugan & Komives, 2007; Hoption, 2014; Hurwitz & Thompson, 2020; Riggio, 2020; Rost, 1991). This neglects today's corporate environment, which has adopted a shared, distributed, or collective leadership model where leaders rely on followers to play key roles (Hurwitz & Hurwitz, 2009; Hurwitz & Thompson, 2020; Kelley, 1988; 1992; Riggio, 2020). Within these models, leadership effectiveness is predicated upon the inclusion of followers, making the role of the follower and the impact they have within an organization more significant (Follett, 1933; Hurwitz & Thompson, 2020; Maroosis, 2008; Riggio, 2020; Riggio et al., 2008; Rost, 1991; 1997).

Despite this, there has not been a distinct leadership curriculum that universities must follow (Hurwitz & Thompson, 2020; Jenkins & Spranger, 2020; Kellerman, 2018a). "If leadership practice is ever to progress...our perception of leadership must become more expansive and inclusive. It must come to include not only leaders but followers" (Kellerman, 2018a, p. 122). However, teaching leadership as a system is more complicated than teaching leadership as a position. The message becomes even more convoluted as higher learning institutions invest substantial resources in educating and training their students to be leaders, yet most will hold a follower role (Hurwitz & Thompson, 2020; Jenkins & Spranger, 2020; Kelley, 1988; 1992).

In addition, just as there is no one comprehensive definition of leaders or leadership, there is no one comprehensive definition of followers or followership (Bass & Bass, 2008; Northouse, 2021; Riggio, 2020; Rost, 1991). This multiplicity of meanings highlights the complexities of including followership within leadership education. Furthermore, little is known about students' current understanding of followership (Hurwitz & Thompson, 2020). These factors have influenced the need to undertake this study.

Defining Followership

Consistent with the diverse meanings surrounding leadership, defining followership is quite complex. Katz and Kahn (1978) have been credited as one of the first to introduce the term followership, and most scholars agree that "if leadership involves actively influencing others, then followership involves allowing oneself to be influenced" (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007, p. 196). Adair (2008) extended this definition with a more balanced approach. He proclaimed that "a follower shares in an influence relationship among leaders and other followers with the intent to support leaders who reflect their mutual purposes" (p. 139). In post-industrial models of leadership, the influence relationship between leaders and followers is reciprocal (Komives et al., 2007; Maroosis, 2008). This is a co-created process where both leaders and followers interact through influence to create leadership.

Brief Literature Review

The following brief literature review will provide a succinct chronology of followership research related to this study, bring to light current literature about followership within higher education, and illustrate how this study will extend prior knowledge on the topic. A more detailed discussion of the above-mentioned areas can be found in Chapter 2 of this dissertation.

Historical Context

Although decades of research have been dedicated to understanding the intricate relationship between the leader and follower, the focus has primarily been on the leader (e.g., Great Man Theory, trait-based approach, behavioral approach, situational leadership, and expectancy-based theories) (Northouse, 2021). When followers had been considered, the purpose was to better understand leadership. The complexity of this issue is enhanced by the paucity of empirical research on followership.

Consequently, this signals a need for embedding followership development, education, and training within a formal leadership curriculum. Kellerman (2019) championed this perspective when she asserted that "it behooves leadership teachers, coaches, and consultants to pay heightened attention to their pedagogies – pedagogies that should include, among other things, the principles of good followership along with those of good leadership" (p. 45). This challenges university leadership programs to shift students' perspectives from hierarchical thinking to systemic thinking (Wielkiewicz, 2000), or as Rost (1991) denoted, shifting from an industrial leadership paradigm to a post-industrial leadership paradigm.

Rost (1991) called this new model "radically different from the industrial school of leadership, which articulates an understanding of leadership as good management" (p. 126). Leadership within the post-industrial paradigm is defined by four essential elements to include: "(1) a relationship based on influence, (2) leaders and followers develop that relationship, (3) they intend real changes, and (4) they have mutual purposes" (Rost, 1991, p. 127). Based on this definition, the follower and followership must be a part of today's formal leadership curriculum.

Notably, Rost (1991) called on educators to adopt a 21st-century model of leadership by conceptualizing the dyadic relationship between leaders and followers. This organizational

model recognizes the significant role and impact a follower has on an organization, stimulating leadership to acknowledge the critical role of the follower. Moreover, “since most of us are more often followers than leaders and engage in multiple follower roles at any given time, followership should be more prevalent in our research” (Raffo, 2013, p. 263). This indicates the need for leadership programs to develop followership and the follower role within the leadership system more explicitly.

Teaching Leadership as a System in Higher Education

To date, there is a dearth of literature surrounding the influence of higher education on college students' leadership capacity (Crossman & Crossman, 2011; Dugan & Komives, 2007; Foley, 2015). Research conducted through the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) set the groundwork for investigating this relationship (Astin, 1993). However, “no clear definition was provided for the term *leadership* when measuring it as a self-reported outcome variable, leaving students to respond from whatever developmental status with which they interpreted the term” (Dugan & Komives, 2007, p. 527). As students tend to enter college with an industrial (i.e., hierarchical) view of leadership, it is vital to examine the ability of leadership programs to transform this perspective into a post-industrial (i.e., systemic) view of leadership (Wagner & Ostick, 2013; Wielkiewicz et al., 2012). A view that not only includes but values the role of the follower.

Furthermore, due to the increasing complexity of leadership and followership, there is a need to teach students to develop a holistic view of the leadership system. Colleges and universities must transform leadership thinking from a leader-centric approach to a systemic approach to develop highly effective leaders and followers (Komives & Dugan, 2014; Wielkiewicz et al., 2012). For example, the Social Change Model (SCM) developed by the

Higher Education Research Institute (1996) uses values called the Seven Cs (i.e., consciousness of self, congruence, commitment, collaboration, common purpose, controversy with civility, and citizenship) to provide an expansive view of the leadership process. These values reinforce how a leader should focus on others but omit how a follower can contribute to the process. Moreover, "while they may lack authority, at least in comparison with their supervisors, followers do not lack power and influence" and thus should be a part of leadership praxis (Kellerman, 2007, p. 91).

Leadership Education and Followership Perceptions

Current followership literature supports the conception that leaders and followers share a common purpose and must be studied together within the context of their relationship (Baker, 2007; Hollander, 1992; Raffo, 2013). However, to date, few studies have focused on the impact of leadership education on college students' perceptions of followers. Foley (2015) addressed this research gap in his article "Followership and Student Leadership: Exploring the Relationship." He posited that "much of what is being taught in leadership development programs is in stark contrast to how students who graduate enter the world of business, government, and industry" (Foley, 2013, p. 4). The results of his study showed "a significant relationship between college students' leadership attitudes and beliefs, their personal leadership identity, and their characterization of followers" (Foley, 2013, p. 1).

Foley (2013; 2015) was the first to compare these three concepts within the context of higher education. His findings suggested that if leadership education can impact students' perceptions of followers, it could shift their leadership beliefs into a post-industrial paradigm. As Foley (2013) opined, further "exploration of how followership can and should be infused into the already well-established leadership development curriculum at colleges and universities is

necessary" (p. 1). The results of his study support the notion that higher education should present a leadership system that prepares students to be effective as both a leader and a follower.

All things considered, the leadership industry should be dedicated to both leadership and followership because 21st-century organizations need more highly developed and effective followers. As a deeper understanding of followership emerges, it is time for higher learning institutions to prepare students to be successful within the leadership system. This can be accomplished by offering students the opportunity to learn more about the theory and practice of leadership, followership, follower typologies, and the co-production of leadership (Murji, 2015).

However, the question remains, how or where does followership praxis begin? The present study explored this by examining how doctoral students in a formal leadership program conceptualize followership. After conducting an extensive review of the literature related to this study, the researcher believes this is the first study to explore this phenomenon.

Statement of the Problem

Existing followership studies often focus on theory and typology versus the practical implications of followership development. Of these, a fragment focuses this research within higher education. If a leader's effectiveness is, to a great extent, dependent on their followers, why are followers left out of the research equation? Moreover, why does the leader dominate leadership studies within higher education when most of its members will hold a follower role (Kelley, 1988)?

This problem describes the need for a new leadership development model within higher education: a curriculum that includes the role of the follower and followership development within the leadership system. Universities need to fully educate, train, and develop students by including followership within their leadership studies. This goes further than just adding skills or

literacy within followership. This growth is toward developing followers with self-authorizing minds that have the ability to contribute to the leadership process (Kegan, 1982). This development should not be fixed but a lifelong period of growth and change.

Adding to the root of this issue is the current state of leadership research. Since the early 1930s, scholars have placed a higher priority on the *peripheries* and *content* of the leader rather than examining the *process* of leadership (Rost, 1991). Focusing primarily on the traits and behaviors of leaders may be measurable, but it leaves behind the true essence of leadership, which is conceptualized as a relationship. As Rost (1991) asserted,

> The process of leadership, the understanding of leadership as a relationship, the connection among leaders and followers---all these are far down the list of priorities that scholars and practitioners must have in order to understand how to put leadership to work. (p. 4)

Burns (1978) took this even further by arguing that "if we know all too much about our leaders, we know far too little about leadership" (p. 2).

Furthermore, it is neither practical nor possible for everyone to be a leader (Kellerman, 2008). There are usually more followers than leaders in boardrooms, classrooms, and other university sites. As Lippitt (1982) opined, "One interesting discovery has been that, many times, leadership training is dysfunctional in that it puts an emphasis on strengthening the role of leadership without focusing on strengthening the skills and competencies of members" (pp. 401–402). This is not to suggest that leaders should be neglected but rather to embed a followership framework within a leadership development system. While it may mirror leadership, followership development requires unique instruction to be successful. Exploring the processes, concepts, theories, and perspectives regarding followership will expand students' leadership

capacity and contribute to their overall development (Hurwitz & Thompson, 2020; Riggio, 2020).

How, then, do leadership educators begin to integrate followership into their leadership curricula? Bain's (2004) study on effective college teaching recognized that mental models change slowly. He suggested starting with the students rather than the discipline, finding out who they are, what they care about, and what they already know. In *Essential Learning Theories*, Johnson (2019) proffered that expanding on students' current knowledge can "strengthen neural pathways and build neural networks" (p. 19). In addition, learning new information is easier when it is built upon *existing* neural networks (Johnson, 2019). Tokuhama-Espinosa (2021) furthered this within the context of *brain-based teaching* when she posited that "great teachers incorporate the fact that all new learning passes through the filter of prior experience" (p. 2). Therefore, determining how students conceptualize followership offers a starting point for educators to develop a followership framework within their leadership praxis.

Theoretical Framework

This research explored how doctoral students in a formal leadership program conceptualize followership. The objectives were to examine their followership style, perception of followership, and leadership attitudes and beliefs. The following research questions guided this study:

RQ: How do doctoral students in a formal leadership program conceptualize followership?

- **Sub RQ 1:** What are the followership styles among doctoral students in a formal leadership program?
- **Sub RQ 2:** What are the leadership attitudes and beliefs among doctoral students in a formal leadership program?
- **Sub RQ 3:** What is the perception of followership among doctoral students in a formal leadership program?

The two theories that heavily influenced this research include the *relational leadership model* (Komives et al., 2007) and the *leadership co-created process* (Shamir, 2007; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). These approaches view leadership and followership as a relationship that is "co-created through the combined act of leading and following" (Northouse, 2021, p. 364). For the intention of this study to extend the current followership literature, the researcher adopted a follower-centric, post-industrial leadership framework. This framework is based on a relational process of leaders and followers working together toward a common purpose, designed to bring about real change (Hurwitz & Thompson, 2020; Komives et al., 2007; Northouse, 2021; Rost, 1991; Wagner & Ostick, 2013).

Research Paradigm

A *research paradigm* is defined as a "set of common beliefs and agreements shared between scientists about how problems should be understood and addressed" (Kuhn, 1962, p.

43). According to Scotland (2012), four components make up a research paradigm: *ontology, epistemology, methodology,* and *methods*. Ergo, to best address the above-mentioned research questions, the researcher adopted a pragmatist, mixed-methods research paradigm. This paradigm aligned with the researcher's *ontological* and *epistemological* assumptions that "reality is constantly renegotiated, debated, interpreted, and therefore the best method to use is the one that solves the problem" (Patel, 2015, Table 1). In addition, using a pragmatist paradigm assisted in achieving epistemological status within the research, converged the results, and provided a fuller, deeper answer to this study's research questions (Briggs et al., 2012; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

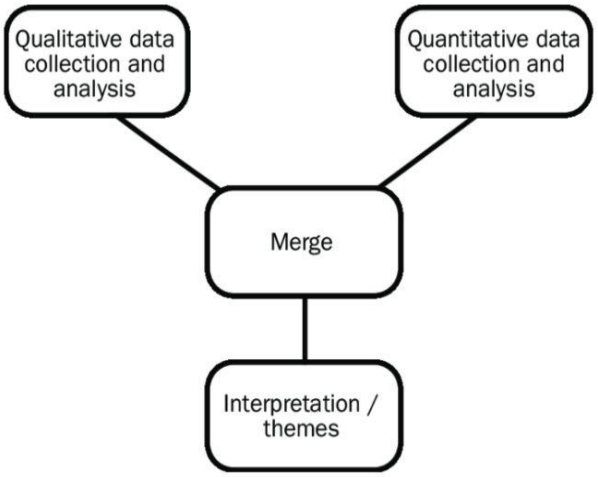
The *methodology* used for this study focused on analyzing quantitative and qualitative data. The following empirically tested and reliable scales were used to conduct the quantitative sequence: Kelley's (1992) Followership Questionnaire (KFQ), Wielkiewicz's (2000) Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Scale (LABS-III), and Sy's (2010) Implicit Followership Theory (IFT) measure. The KFQ established students' followership style, the LABS-III determined their leadership attitudes and beliefs, and the IFT measure determined students' perceptions of followership. The qualitative sequence consisted of one-on-one interviews with semi-structured, open-ended questions about each of these variables. The *method* used to conduct this mixed-methods exploratory analysis included distributing an online survey to a cross-section of doctoral students within a formal leadership program at a Midwestern, four-year public university. The benefit of using survey research was that it could measure attitudes and perceptions and efficiently gather a large amount of information (Fraenkel et al., 2019).

This mixed research design matrix was an equal status, concurrent design: (QUAN + QUAL). Therefore, this study fell within the triangulation design of mixed-methods research.

According to Fraenkel et al. (2019), “triangulation design involves conducting both a qualitative study and a quantitative study (usually concurrently) and determining whether the results of the two studies converge on a single understanding of the underlying phenomenon” (p. 524). Creswell and Plano Clark (2017) labeled this a convergent design. The basic premise of this mixed design is to combine the two databases to obtain a holistic interpretation of the problem (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Convergent Design



Note. Taken from Creswell and Plano Clark, 2017.

Purpose of the Study

The objective of this study was to determine how doctoral students in a formal leadership program conceptualize followership. The significance of this research is that educators must approach curriculum development from their students’ current stage of followership conception. This offers a starting point for facilitating holistic leadership development that views leadership as a relational process.

Although followership is a relatively new field of study, scholars within leadership education have provided theoretical and conceptual data on the power and influence of the follower. In addition, many institutions have implemented a foundation of followership with compelling results, yet the barrier to change seems not to be the solution itself but how to get the solution to penetrate leadership models in a uniform way. Kellerman (2018a) furthered this point by asserting,

> If leadership practice is ever to be based on leadership theory, that is, on a system of knowledge...our conception of leadership must become more expansive and inclusive... It must come to include not only leaders and followers and context but explorations and conversations about bad leadership as well as good leadership. (p. 122)

This suggests a call to acknowledge the power and influence of followers within the leadership process. It starts with an understanding of students' current thoughts and perceptions on followership and moves into how to develop an expansive and inclusive leadership model that can be integrated within the program.

Higher learning institutions have an opportunity to create a cross-sector solution by developing this leadership praxis. This cannot be changed by one field acting alone but through collaboration toward curriculum development that leads to systemic change processes in how leadership is taught, learned, and assessed. A curriculum that could streamline leadership studies to include followership education, training, and development, thus preparing students to contribute to the leadership system regardless of their role.

Equally important is the demand for effective followership has steadily increased for employers. In today's corporate environment, traditional forms of leadership have given way to shared, distributed, and collective leadership models where leaders rely on followers to play key

roles. According to the 2020 job outlook survey of the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE), the ability to work in a team is listed as one of the most sought-after characteristics of college graduates. This replaced leadership skills, which dropped to sixth on the list ("NACE," 2020). In other words, employers prioritize the capacity to be an effective follower over the propensity of leadership skills their prospective employees possess.

Furthermore, as companies seek cost-effective ways to improve efficiency and increase organizational outcomes, the practical implications of developing highly effective followers are vast. Therefore, all-encompassing leadership andragogy, one that includes the role of the follower, would fully prepare students to understand the leadership system and to be effective within the process regardless of the context or dynamics within their role.

Definition of Key Terms

- **Andragogy:** The art and science of helping adults learn. The study of adult education theory, processes, and technology as distinguished from pedagogy (i.e., teaching children and youth) (Knowles, 1970).
- **Antiprototypic:** This term labels individuals with a more negative Implicit Followership Theory (IFT) score. Followers are perceived as antiprototypic when they are viewed as conformists, insubordinates, or incompetent. (Sy, 2010).
- **Co-production of leadership:** The joint contribution of leaders and followers to the formation, nature, and consequences of leadership (Shamir, 2007).
- **Follower:** Collaborators who are involved and influential within the leadership system (Rost, 1991).
- **Follower prototype:** The abstractions of a set of characteristics common to followers and unique to the follower category (Lord & Shondrick, 2011).

- **Followers' co-production beliefs:** "The extent to which individuals believe the follower role involves partnering with leaders to advance the mission and achieve optimal levels of productivity" (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2012, p. 211).
- **Followership**: Followership is defined within this study using Hurwitz and Hurwitz's (2015) concept that leadership is setting the framework, and followership is creating within that framework. Adair (2008) furthered this by stating, "A follower shares in an influence relationship among leaders and other followers with the intent to support leaders who reflect their mutual purposes" (p. 139).
- **Hierarchical Thinking (HT):** The perspective that organizations should be structured in a top-down leadership model with power at the top (Wielkiewicz, 2000).
- **Implicit Followership Theory (IFT):** Individuals' personal assumptions about traits and behaviors that characterize followers (Shondrick & Lord, 2010; Sy, 2010).
- **Implicit Leadership Theory (ILT):** The schemas unconsciously formed by followers that help distinguish leaders from non-leaders (Eden & Leviathan, 1975; Shondrick & Lord, 2010).
- **Industrial paradigm:** An industrial paradigm is a scholarly perspective that categorizes leadership theory and research as "rational, management-oriented, male, technocratic, quantitative, goal dominated, soft-benefit driven, personalistic, hierarchical, short term, pragmatic, and materialistic" (Rost, 1991, p. 94).
- **Leader:** One who influences, motivates, or empowers others, often to achieve a specific goal ("ASHP Practitioner Recognition Program— 2011 Fellows of the American Society of Health-System Pharmacists," 2011).

- **Leader-member exchange:** A relationship-based approach to leadership that focuses on the dyadic relationship between leaders and followers (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).
- **Leadership:** A process between at least two individuals; the leader and the follower (Bass & Bass, 2008). Leadership is setting the frame, and followership is creating within it (Hurwitz & Hurwitz, 2015).
- **Leadership System:** Includes four essential elements: (1) a relationship based on influence, (2) leaders and followers develop that relationship, (3) they intend real changes, and (4) they have mutual purposes" (Rost, 1991, p. 127).
- **Post-industrial paradigm:** A scholarly perspective that categorizes leadership as "beyond, or more than, or different from the present, industrial era" (Rost, 1991, p. 100).
- **Prototypic:** Abstract composites of the most representative member or the most commonly shared attributes of a particular category (Lord & Maher, 1993; Rosch, 1975). This term labels individuals with a more positive followership theory score. Followers are seen as prototypic when they are strong in industry, enthusiasm, and good citizenship (Sy, 2010).
- **Relationship:** "As used in research, refers to a connection or association between two or more characteristics or qualities" (Fraenkel et al., 2019, p. 35).
- **Systemic Thinking (ST):** A perspective that organizations share power and influence throughout the organization (Wielkiewicz, 2000).

Scope of the Study

This research explored how doctoral students in a formal leadership program conceptualize followership. This study was conducted at a mid-sized, not-for-profit, four-year public institution and was bound by the context and time at which it was completed. This

contextual specificity can affect the transferability of this study (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Because of these students' exposure to formal leadership theory, practice, and training, the researcher assumed this sample of students would be more likely to participate in followership research. In addition, most doctoral students at the site institution work full-time while pursuing their degrees. This would suggest that these participants could draw upon their professional work experiences while completing the study. The following will provide further detail on the assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of this research.

Assumptions

- The samples used in this study were representative of the total doctoral population of the Department of Leadership and Learning at the university.
- Participant responses accurately reflected their perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs.
- Doctoral students who work full-time could draw upon their professional work experiences while completing the survey.
- Doctoral students within the Department of Leadership and Learning may be more inclined to participate in a study on followership.

Limitations

A significant limitation of this study was that the sample consisted of doctoral students at the researcher's institution. According to Fraenkel et al. (2019), convenience sampling is a "disadvantage in that the sample will quite likely be biased" (p. 99). In addition, the representativeness of the sample population was composed of primarily Midwestern, White students, making it difficult to generalize the results across cultures, let alone the broader U.S. population. Consequently, the generalizability of the study's results was strong under the

population of interest but inadequate in terms of external validity. In addition, this study was limited based on the voluntary participation of an electronically delivered survey.

Although Kelley's (1992) KFQ, Wielkiewicz's (2000) LABS-III, and Sy's (2010) IFT measures have been validated, they used a self-report method which is considered an explicit measure. Self-reports allow participants time for deliberation, influencing a more socially desirable response. In other words, participants may be leery of portraying negative biases toward followers, and therefore, these attitudes may not have been fully captured within the existing scales. In addition, "The KFQ has not been widely tested and lacks broad empirical support. Despite this fact, the KFQ is implemented in followership research through multiple studies" (Ligon et al., 2019, p. 97).

Delimitations

In selecting the sample population for this study, the researcher considered that the Department of Leadership and Learning is the largest graduate-level department at the university. Participants were eligible to partake in the study if they were doctoral degree-seeking members of this department and were enrolled in a course within the spring, summer, or fall 2022 terms. The scope of the quantitative sequence was limited to recruiting 89 participants who were contacted through their student email accounts. This recruitment period lasted three weeks and ended when either 30 participants were secured, or three weeks had passed.

Significance of the Study

In a world bristling with rapid communication and continuous technological advancements, higher learning institutions cannot continue to prepare 21st-century students using an industrial model of leadership. This traditional top-down organizational hierarchy does not allow for effective communication or adaptation to ever-changing environments. Moreover,

if it is accepted that the role of the follower and the development of followership is an integral part of leadership and vital to organizational success, then why does leadership development, education, and training become increasingly ubiquitous while the inclusion of followership is scarce? This is partly due to the notion that development in these areas requires a significant investment of financial resources and time, and followership as a field of intellectual inquiry on its own faces an uphill climb.

Interestingly, higher learning institutions continuously reinvent leadership development to keep pace with the innovation and expansion taking place in the world at large. In the last two centuries, fundamental social changes have influenced the evolution of organizational models to minimize the hierarchical layers between leaders and followers. Universities went from recruiting and shaping transformational leaders to developing them internally. Although this focus expanded leadership training, it fundamentally limited its ability to reach most organizational members (i.e., followers). This fixed curriculum is ill-suited for a flatter organizational model heavily relying on its followers' effectiveness.

Equally important, universities in a democratic society are responsible for benefiting their communities and the public by preparing future leaders and followers. Moreover, the university's influence on the labor market has increased exponentially as economic and social stratification has become heavily dependent on academic qualifications. This connection between higher education and American society is reciprocal, yet, arguably, the leadership industry has infiltrated this relationship by creating more of a reactive than proactive climate for developing followers. This disconnect questions the relevance of traditional leadership education, training, and development models (Nohria & Khurana, 2010).

Fortunately, universities have historically been change-agents in the way they address issues confronting society. Through innovation and re-engagement in this post-industrial era, higher education has the opportunity to transform its leadership development---proactively developing followership within its leadership system, not only to align the needs of its internal organization but the demands of society. As Foley (2013) proffered,

> By doing so, a stage can be set for future success by providing students with background knowledge, first-hand experience, and critical thought analysis around the concepts of followers and following effectively. This will help to ensure students will be successful no matter what type of leadership/followership paradigm they encounter. (p. 6)

Furthermore, it offers a useful starting point for leadership educators seeking to integrate followership into the leadership system.

The implications of this study are that more attention should be given to how to include followership education, training, and development in leadership programs and where to start. This research topic aims to launch a conversation to include followership in relation to organizational leadership. Moreover, to reverse the lens of leadership research to better understand and develop effective followers and followership (Shamir, 2007).

Conclusion

In sum, if a leader's effectiveness is dependent on their followers, as educators, we must implement purposeful leadership education that includes followership to fully develop the leadership capacity of students entering a post-industrial society. Organizations presume that people can follow effectively without any training, and if one assumes that followers can be trained, educated, and developed, why is this not done? Very few students are the beneficiaries of an andragogical process that intentionally prepares them to follow (Agho, 2009). This

transformation must begin with an understanding of how students conceptualize the followership phenomenon.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 1 of this study provided a statement of the problem and the purpose and significance of this research in furthering the existing literature on followership. In addition, it outlined the theoretical framework and synthesized the relevant scholarship related to this study. Chapter 2 will detail the burgeoning literature surrounding followership. Chapter 3 delineates the research design and methodology for data collection and analysis. Chapters 4 and 5 will reveal and discuss the results and recommendations for the inclusion of followership within leadership education for future study. The chapters conclude with a reference list and appendices.

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review provides a deeper understanding of the role of the follower and followership within the leadership system and is based on theoretical and empirical research. The focus of this review is divided into the following four sections: First, to describe the early history of leadership theory in relation to the role of the follower. Second, to detail prominent follower typologies, examine the co-production of followership, and discuss implicit followership theory. Third, to examine the current conceptual and empirical literature relevant to this study's research questions. Finally, to provide a synthesis and critique of the literature.

Methods of Research

Various methods were used to conduct this review, including general reference tools, primary, and secondary sources. The researcher referred to electronic indexes and abstracts through Google Scholar, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), PsycINFO, PsychArticles, BusinessSourcePremier, and ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, to begin the search. The following subject terms and descriptors were utilized to locate additional primary and secondary resources:

- Follower, followership, follower typology, follower behavior, follower outcomes, follower schema, follower identity
- Followership development, followership schema, leadership, and followership co-production
- Courageous follower, effective follower, engaged follower
- Implicit followership theory/theories, implicit theories of followership, IFT/IFTs
- Implicit leadership theory/theories, implicit theories of leadership, ILT/ILTs

- Follower prototype, follower antiprototype
- Industrial leadership, post-industrial leadership, systemic leadership, hierarchical leadership

This systematic analysis included resources that explicitly discussed the above-mentioned subject terms, descriptors, and Boolean operators. The primary and secondary sources that complemented this review include over 100 peer-reviewed journal articles and books. In addition, pioneers in the field of followership and implicit followership theories that emerged throughout this review are included in this chapter.

The Evolution of Followership

Historical Context

The role of the follower within the leadership system has changed dramatically since the Industrial Revolution. This trajectory launched from a hierarchical perspective rooted within the *closed systems theory* and *efficiency movement* of the early 20th century. Collectively, these theories were called *machine theory*, which was fixated on task orientation and managerial planning (Marion & Gonzalez, 2014). Those at the top of the hierarchy would make decisions for the organization, and the employees (i.e., followers) would be responsible for carrying out the work. The primary function of leadership within this theory was to promote the efficiency of tasks performed by followers. This approach aligned with the perspective that organizations should be arranged in a hierarchy with all the power at the top. This *hierarchical thinking* (HT) is most closely associated with an industrial paradigm of leadership, which Rost (1991) categorized as management-oriented and goal-dominated.

The industrial paradigm of leadership disparaged the follower with the assumption that they could not act intelligently without the control of others. Undoubtedly, machine theory was

missing a critical component that would prove to increase productivity and strengthen the organization as a whole. This missing component linked to the personal and social needs of the follower and led to the development of the *human relations theory*. Leaders began to focus their efforts on relationship-building within the organization to positively influence their followers and utilize these social dynamics to achieve change. These two theories created a dichotomy between management and leadership. Management became more about doing things right, while leadership aimed to do the right thing. *Structural functionalism* bridged the gap between these two theories and relieved the tension between the rational (i.e., task-driven theory) and the non-rational (i.e., people-driven theory). Here, the leader's function was to influence change through positive human relations while creating goals that motivated followers within the organization (Marion & Gonzalez, 2014).

Ergo, leadership effectiveness became predicated upon the inclusion of followers, which minimized this top-down, hierarchical thinking. Follett (1933) was discerning of this when she proposed direct, rather than hierarchical, coordination of activities. She advocated for a distributed leadership model, where the role of the follower and the impact they have within an organization could become more significant. Follett (1933) was the first to acknowledge the absence of followers within leadership research when she opined,

> And now let me speak to you for a moment of something which seems to me of the utmost importance, but which has been far too little considered, and that is the part of the followers in the leadership situation. Their part is not merely to follow, they have a very active part to play and that is to keep the leader in control of a situation... In no aspect of our subject do we see a greater discrepancy between theory and practice than here…

> Leader and follower are both following the invisible leader – the common purpose. (p. 172)

Though Follett (1933) pointed out the interdependence of leaders and followers and the active role that followers play, it was not until Max Weber began to explore the perceptions of followers within leadership that the groundwork for followership research theory began (Thorne et al., 1948). The underpinning of this Weberian approach focused on authority and power over the follower. Moreover, the grounding theme throughout the leadership theories during the industrial era was the reification of leadership as a hierarchical construct that separated the leaders from the led.

Systemic Thinking/Post-industrial Paradigm of Leadership

This hierarchical thinking shifted in the early 1970s at the onset of the post-industrial era. There was a rise of interactional theories of leadership that integrated the leader with the context, a context that included followers. This integration was the foundation of situational leadership theory (SLT) (Hersey & Blanchard, 1977) and Fiedler's contingency theory. The *situation* referred to the level (i.e., capability) of the followers in the former and leader-member relations in the latter. Leaders were encouraged to change their behaviors based on what the followers required (Riggio, 2020). "Regardless, in all of these approaches to leadership, the leader is the 'lever' that moves the followers to action and produces outcomes for the collective" (Riggio, 2020, p. 16). Thus, even though the follower was beginning to be considered, it was only in relation to the needs of the leader.

Nevertheless, organizations began to be viewed as collaborative entities that shared power and influence with all members (i.e., leaders and followers). This distributed leadership model depicted the understanding "that organizational leadership should be every individual's

responsibility" (Wielkiewicz & Meuwissen, 2014, p. 221). This ideology was in sharp contrast to hierarchical thinking and became definitive of the post-industrial paradigm of leadership. Rost (1991) called this a "radical transformation which is changing the basic values upon which the present, industrial era has been based" (p. 100). He argued that in the industrial paradigm of leadership, followers do followership, and in the post-industrial paradigm of leadership, followers do leadership. According to Wielkiewicz (2000), this new paradigm embodied *systemic thinking* (ST), which is founded on the "ability to relate a variety of ideas and concepts to organizational success" (p. 341). It is this change in thinking that signaled the transition of leadership from positional (i.e., hierarchical leadership) to non-positional (i.e., systemic leadership) (Komives et al., 2005).

As a result of this transition, research within leadership from almost every discipline erupted in the early 1980s. A common thread within this period was that leadership was equated with influence, not authority. Although this concept dates back to the early 1930s, the "scholars of the 1980s gave the concept more clarity and strength" (Rost, 1991, p. 79). This research supported a bidirectional relationship between leader(s) and follower(s), suggesting that a follower's influence on a leader is as impactful as a leader's influence on a follower (Carsten et al., 2010; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Correspondingly, keeping these two processes separate maintained the leader-follower dyad set up through hierarchical, bureaucratic organizations and consequently limited organizational success.

If followers choose whether to follow, and leaders do not exist without followers, then "setting up a dichotomy of leadership and followership means that followers can never participate in the leadership decision-making process authentically" (Riggio et al., 2008, p. 55).

This rationality highlights the need to better understand the conditions that cultivate followership within the leadership process. Bennis (2009) emphasized this point when he asserted:

> None of us is as smart as all of us... In a society as complex and technologically sophisticated as ours, the most urgent projects require the coordinated contributions of many talented people... We have to recognize a new paradigm: not great leaders alone but great leaders who exist in a fertile relationship with a Great Group. (p. 138)

The momentum in equating leadership with influence in the 1980s spurred a deeper look into the leadership process, a process that included the roles, behaviors, and perceptions of followers (Bennis, 2007).

Leadership Beliefs

This concentrated look into leadership as a process spurred the development of Wielkiewicz's (2000) Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Scale (LABS), which measured the strength of individuals' attitudes and beliefs about hierarchical and systemic leadership. The instrument was conceptualized based on Allen, Stelzner, and Wielkiewicz's (1998) theory of ecological leadership, which posited that the complexities of organizations require adaptive systems thinking and shared responsibility amongst its members. This "systemic approach breaks down hierarchical structures and invites organization members to participate in the leadership processes" (Wielkiewicz & Meuwissen, 2014, p. 221). Notably, Wielkiewicz (2000) emphasized the impact of the feedback loop on this theory, proclaiming,

> The feedback loop is a process in which incoming information causes a change in a system that, in turn, also changes the incoming feedback...organizations that are open to the greatest diversity of feedback loops are likely to be the most successful in the long term. (p. 336)

This suggests that embedding followership education, training, and development within existing leadership programs could change the incoming feedback and shift students' beliefs and attitudes toward followers.

Wielkiewicz (2000) developed his initial LABS instrument with data collected from over 650 participants across three higher learning institutions. The results produced eight factors related to Allen et al.'s (1998) ecology of leadership theory: authority, relationship orientation, ethics, learning orientation, change-centered, systems thinking, positional leadership dependence, and cooperative leadership processes. These eight factors were loaded into one of two independent dimensions: a) systemic thinking and b) hierarchical thinking.

Wielkiewicz (2000) called this revised instrument the LABS-III, and it included 28 statements using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly agree; 5 = strongly disagree). The instrument is associated with two orthogonal scales: the Hierarchical Thinking scale and the Systemic Thinking scale. "The Hierarchical Thinking scale consists of 14 items that suggest organizations should be organized in a stable hierarchical manner with power and control focused in the upper levels of the hierarchy" (Wielkiewicz, 2000, p. 341). This is most closely related to an industrial paradigm of leadership. The Systemic Thinking scale also includes 14 items and reflects "an ability to relate a variety of ideas and concepts to organizational success" (Wielkiewicz, 2000, p. 341). This is most closely related to a post-industrial paradigm of leadership. The next section will approach the leadership system from a follower-centric view by reviewing the literature encompassing the follower and followership.

Follower Omission

As noted above, leadership research has spanned centuries, producing multiple theories, frameworks, and processes. In fact, descriptions of leadership have varied across cultures and organizations. Still, one of the most widely accepted definitions is a process between at least two individuals; the leader and the follower (Bass & Bass, 2008). However, historically, leadership research has not just ignored the role of the follower; it has substantially overshadowed research on followership (Blanchard et al., 2009; Chaleff, 1995; Collinson, 2006; Kelley, 1988; Riggio et al., 2008; Uhl-Bien et al., 2007). Furthermore, when followers are considered, they are typically viewed as *constructors* of leaders (Meindl et al., 1985). If leadership is a relational process between leaders and followers, why are followers left out of the equation?

This neglect can be attributed to several factors: First, there is a bias that leaders hold higher importance over followers (Meindl, 1995; Meindl et al., 1985). Organizations spend vast amounts of time and money building and recruiting leaders, though they make up only 20% of the workforce (Kelley, 1992). Meindl and Ehrlich (1985) called this a romanticized view of leadership. Bennis & Biederman (1997) echoed this notion by stating, “Our contemporary views of leadership are entwined with our notions of heroism, so much so that the distinction between ‘leader’ and ‘hero’ ...often becomes blurred” (p. 1).

Second, there is a stigma associated with the term follower. They are seen as passive and submissive, even categorized as non-leaders, yet the expectation for followers is to be active and engaged in the leadership process (Hollander, 1974; Kelley, 1988; 1992). This negative image impacts the interdependent leader-follower relationship and could lead followers to reject their identified role.

Third, the term follower has not fully evolved with the post-industrial understanding of leadership (Riggio et al., 2008; Rost, 1991). This definition must catch up with the concept that today's organizational frameworks are moving toward a distributed leadership structure that empowers the follower (Kellerman, 2008). Consequently, the 21st-century workforce models have increased the decision-making authority of their followers and have outperformed the traditional top-down approach.

Depicting Follower Typologies

Numerous studies on follower typologies and followership styles emerged to contribute to Kelley's (1988; 1992) initial research. It began with approaches that identified the follower's role and treatment pertaining to the leader (e.g., leader-centric, follower-centric, and relational views). These approaches "recognized leadership as a co-constructed process between leaders and followers acting in context," but they do not consider that to understand leadership fully, we must understand the role of the follower (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014, p. 12). To fill this gap, researchers used approaches to focus on the follower's hierarchical role (i.e., role-based approach) and the process of followership (i.e., constructionist followership approach). They examined followership through the lens that leadership can only occur if there is followership.

Zaleznik

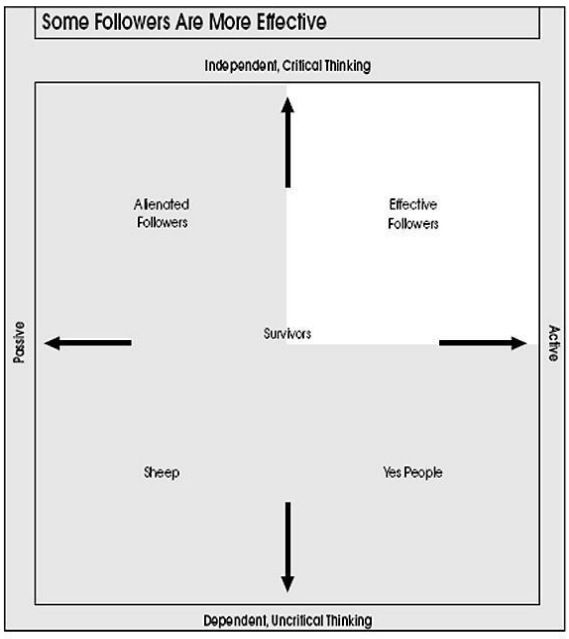
Using this role-based followership approach, researchers explored how traits and behaviors influence leaders within a hierarchical context. Harvard Business School professor Abraham Zaleznik (1965) was the first to identify follower typology using an activity-passivity range to distinguish subordinates as *withdrawn* (submissive/passive), *masochistic* (submissive/active), *compulsive* (highly dominant/passive), *and impulsive* (highly dominant/active).

Kelley

Kelley (1988; 1992) continued Zaleznik's (1965) typology exploration by creating a dependent-independent and passive-active quadrant to identify the level of effective followers. He used critical thinking and activity dimensions to illustrate five follower types: effective/exemplary, alienated, sheep, yes people, and survivors (see Figure 2). According to Kelley (1988), *effective/exemplary* followers can succeed regardless of leadership. They are highly committed to the organization, "courageous, honest, and credible" (Kelley, 1988, p. 144). *Alienated* followers were likely effective followers whose purpose became inconsistent with the organization's goals or leader at some point in time. *Sheep* do not show initiative and are likely the result of a micromanager or a blame-oriented culture. *Yes people/conformists* follow blindly and eagerly agree with their leaders in any situation, while the *survivor* can assume multiple followership styles depending on the environment.

Figure 2

Effective Followers



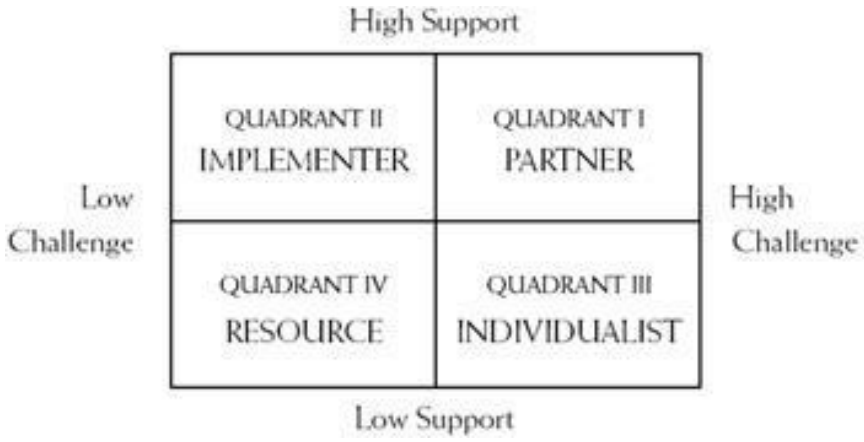
Note. Taken from Kelley, 1988, p.5.

Chaleff

Nearly a decade later, executive coach Ira Chaleff (1995) expanded this research in *The Courageous Follower.* Here, he posited that effective followership is vital for effective leadership. He delineated four follower styles (i.e., partners, implementers, individualists, and resources) based on their participation level and asserted that leaders would not have long-term success without follower support (See Figure 3). According to Chaleff (1995; 2003), followers must have the courage to stand up to and for leaders. Unlike Kelley (1988), Chaleff (1995) illustrated positive attributes among the four styles. For example, *partners* are described as having a deep respect for the leader and having the courage to challenge them when necessary. *Implementers* are the workhorses of the organization, yet they rarely question their directives. *Individualists* are seen as vital to keeping the balance of followers blindly going along with the leader's directive. Lastly, *resource followers* do what is requested of them, no more, no less.

Figure 3

The Courageous Follower



Note. Taken from Chaleff, 1995.

Blackshear

These pioneers in role-based followership research triggered Patsy Blackshear, Jean Lipman-Blumen, and Barbara Kellerman to expand the follower typology scholarship in the 2000s. First, Blackshear (2004) identified followership along a five-stage continuum: employee, committed, engaged, effective, and exemplary, which assessed the intensity of energy given by the workforce. The first stage, *employee*, starts when the individual provides work for compensation. They move into the *committed* stage when they buy into the organization's mission. As the committed follower becomes an active supporter of the organization, they are labeled as *engaged*. When the individual is capable and dependable, they have reached the *effective* stage. Lastly, when the follower works to support the leader and can fill the leader's position, they have reached the *exemplary* followership stage.

Lipman-Blumen

Second, Lipman-Blumen (2005) set out to answer the question, "Given that we recognize toxic leaders for what they are, why do we not only tolerate but often prefer and sometimes even create them?" (Riggio et al., 2008, p. 181). She defined a toxic leader as one who engages in destructive behaviors and does lasting damage to their followers and the organization (Hodos Institute, 2013). Her research identified three follower types that comply with this toxic leadership: benign followers, the leader's entourage, and malevolent followers. *Benign followers* pursue their own goals over that of the organization. They are seeking out a strong leader who can offer safety or heroism. The *leader's entourage* actively works to keep the toxic leader in their power position, especially if they see an avenue for promotion. The *malevolent follower* is often a future toxic leader. They are driven by ambition and power above all and have the potential to sabotage the organization (Lipman-Blumen, 2005).

Kellerman

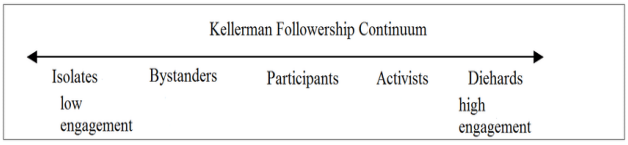
Lastly, Kellerman's (2008) political science background directed her followership research to measure the follower's level of engagement and their ability to be change agents. She articulated the need for this new classification when she proclaimed,

> The typology I've developed after years of study and observation aligns followers on one, all-important metric—level of engagement. I categorize all followers according to where they fall along a continuum that ranges from "feeling and doing absolutely nothing" to "being passionately committed and deeply involved." I chose level of engagement because, regardless of context, it's the follower's degree of involvement that largely determines the nature of the superior-subordinate relationship. (para. 13)

Kellerman (2008) established five typologies: isolate, bystander, participant, activist, and diehard (See Figure 4). *Isolate* followers show little to no engagement; they are neither informed nor motivated within the leadership process. Isolates are likely to work within large organizations where they can quickly go unnoticed. On the other hand, the *bystander* is aware of what is happening around them but still chooses not to participate. "They consciously choose to fly under the radar" (para. 21). *Participant* followers care enough about the organization to either engage for or against the leader, whereas *activist* followers are energetically engaged and can significantly impact the organization. The strongest level of engagement comes from the *diehard* follower. They are described as being deeply devoted to their cause. If they support their leader, they can be a tremendous asset; if not, a serious liability.

Figure 4

Level of Engagement



Note. Kellerman (2007).

As noted above, there are many types of follower roles grouped into classification systems of follower behaviors. The researcher of this study chose to focus on Kelley's (1992) typology by using the Kelley Followership Questionnaire (KFQ). "Kelley developed the KFQ with the purpose of helping followers identify their type and strive for increased independent, critical thinking and active engagement" (Ligon et al., 2019, p. 97). Blanchard et al. (2009) were among the first to validate Kelley's (1992) followership dimensions. They expanded his research by demonstrating its impact on higher education. The authors examined how followership styles related to organizational behavior. Even though the results of Blanchard et al. (2009) validated Kelley's dimensions, the authors cautioned future researchers as their findings were not precisely as Kelley predicted. More information on the KFQ is in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

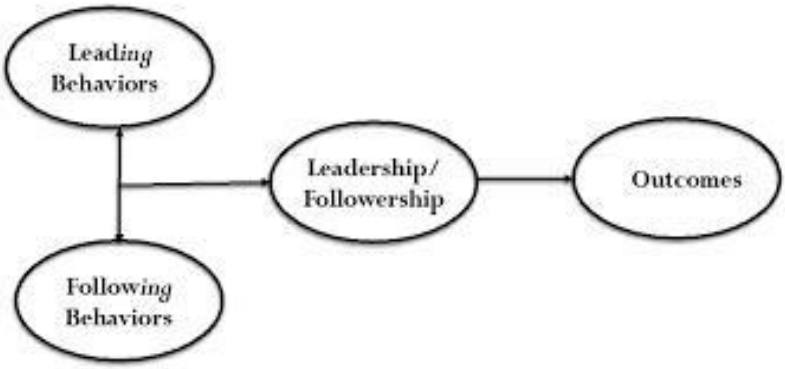
In sum, these role-based followership views *reverse the lens* in researching follower typologies as a precursor to leader behaviors (Shamir, 2007). Although this approach has contributed to followership literature, it has been criticized for the lack of empirical research grounding its assumptions. Further, it does not explain why some subordinates are seen as leaders and some supervisors are seen as followers. Because of this, theorists began conceptualizing leadership as a mutual process utilizing a constructionist followership approach.

Co-production of Leadership and Followership

A constructionist followership approach examines the process of co-producing leadership and followership as "leadership is a process, not a person" (Hollander, 1992, p. 71). The work by Shamir (2007) provided one of the early insights into co-production. He adopted Graen and Uhl-Bien's (1995) development of leader-member exchange (LMX) theory and Hollander's (1993) active role of the follower to develop the leadership co-production model (see Figure 5). He proposed that identity is linked to followers having agency and the ability to actively shape the leadership process. Shamir's (2007) work emphasized that "both leaders and followers act as 'causal agents' and that leadership research cannot be only leader-centric or follower-centric in nature" (p. xx).

Figure 5

Shamir's co-production model



Note. Taken from Shamir, 2007.

DeRue and Ashford (2010) built on this approach to identify the *claiming* and *granting* processes of leader-follower dyads. This shifted the focus from the hierarchical context that establishes a static leader-follower relationship into an interactive relationship identification. Uhl-Bien et al. (2007) theorized that "If leadership involves actively influencing others, then followership involves allowing oneself to be influenced" (p. 196). This type of relationship is

renegotiated through time and space such that "the boundaries between leader and follower identities are permeable" (DeRue & Ashford, 2010, p. 635).

Carsten et al. (2010) contributed to the constructionist approach by identifying successful follower behaviors and contextual variables that affect followership constructions. They used their study results to understand the *schema* that determines follower social constructions. These schemas are developed based on prior experiences with leaders and followers and are typically formed at an early age. This was a unique viewpoint in that it explored how followers develop and perceive their behaviors while working with leaders. According to the researchers, both schema and context work together to form the foundation for followers to socially construct their roles and relationships within their institution. Sy (2010) advanced the aforementioned work by formally proposing the concept of Implicit Followership Theories (IFTs) based on McGregor's (1960) Theory X and Theory Y. While Carsten et al. (2010) focused on effective followership perceptions (i.e., ideal prototypes), Sy (2010) examined average or typical followership perceptions (i.e., central tendency prototypes).

Implicit Followership Theory

Prior to the qualitative study by Carsten et al. (2010), there had been little research on the perceptions that individuals have about followers, how these perceptions are formed, and how they impact members of the organization. Social cognition literature is at the forefront of this pivotal research. It suggested that individuals naturally classify others as leaders or followers (Engle & Lord, 1997; Fiske & Taylor, 1991; Foti et al., 2017; Lord & Maher, 1993). This information-processing perspective uses sense-making and implicit theories for individuals to simplify and understand events based on human qualities rather than through the complexities of organizational systems (Foti et al., 2017).

These implicit assumptions highlighted particularly relevant research within followership that included both leaders' implicit followership theories (LIFTs) and followers' implicit followership theories (FIFTs) (Sy, 2010). LIFTs and FIFTs make up the perceptions of followers (Whiteley et al., 2012). They have been shown to be linked to a variety of organizational constructs, including both leaders' and followers' leader-member exchange (LMX) and liking, job satisfaction, job performance, employee engagement, attitudes, and citizenship behavior (Epitropaki et al., 2013; Foti et al., 2017; Guo, 2018; Whiteley et al., 2012). These empirical studies support the significance of developing a positive perception of followers, as perceptions guide actions (Hoption, 2014; Lord & Maher, 1991). Komives et al. (2007) furthered this notion when they proffered,

> Followers must be active participants. Often, these approaches do not go far enough to genuinely engage followers while sharing power with them. This difference signals a paradigm shift from controlling follower behavior to empowering followers to be central to an organization's outcomes. (p. 13)

In addition, Lord et al. (1984) developed leader categorization theory by applying social cognitive theory to Eden and Leviathan's (1975) research on implicit leadership theory (ILTs) ILTs have been defined as the schemas unconsciously formed by followers that help distinguish leaders from non-leaders (Shondrick & Lord, 2010). Eden and Leviathan (1975) were the first to establish the connection between ILTs and sense-making processes (Foti et al., 2017). Shondrick et al. (2010) highlighted this theory when they opined,

> According to leadership categorization theory, followers have schemas of what a prototypical leader should be. Foremost, this enables individuals to distinguish leaders

> from non-leaders and make sense of a leader's behavior by assimilating their specific experience with general knowledge about leadership. (p. 961)

A similar socio-cognitive process has been used to understand IFTs. According to Sy (2010), IFTs are “cognitive structures and schemas about the traits and behaviors that characterize followers” (p. 73). Individuals use IFTs as a benchmark in judging and responding to follower behavior. Just as ILTs are the subjective views of leaders, IFTs are the subjective views of followers (Junker & van Dick, 2014). Sy (2010) expanded this theory by examining both followers' and leaders' views of followership. He used these reports to measure IFTs from the leader (LIFTs) and follower (FIFTs) perspectives. According to Sy, LIFTs and FIFTs must be examined to understand the complexities of leader-follower dynamics. However, to date, most of the research has focused on ILTs, leaving out the role of the follower. Sy (2010) addressed this research gap to find the content and structure of IFTs, how they are related to implicit theories, and the “consequences of IFTs for leader-follower interpersonal outcomes” (p. 1).

This research enhanced an understanding of how followers define their roles in relation to their IFT and how a leader's IFT relates to their perceptions of followers. How people define their roles impacts how they spend their time and shapes their interactions with others. Further, research has shown that if a leader holds a positive IFT, they are more likely to have an increased leader-member exchange (LMX) with their follower, which in turn impacts job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). This would indicate that leaders with a negative IFT would also benefit from followership education.

It is important to note that IFTs held by the leader or follower are perceptions of the follower based on the followership schema they have developed over time. These perceptions are not based entirely on reality but on the activation of the member’s followership schema (Guo,

2018). “Individuals may have introspective access (i.e., content awareness) to many phenomena (e.g., explain their assumptions and beliefs about followers) and yet at any given moment lack impact awareness whereby the activation of such phenomena may impact their action tendencies” (Epitropaki et al., 2013, p. 860). Consequently, IFT researchers have faced criticism for using an explicit methodology (i.e., self-reporting) in their implicit assessment.

Since Sy's (2010) seminal study on IFTs, the theory has caught the attention of Leadership Quarterly, which launched two special issues on IFT research (Foti et al., 2014; Foti et al., 2017). IFTs have now become prevalent within organizational behavior research (Guo, 2018). While Sy (2010) identified the concept, content, and structure of IFTs, there has been extensive research into the processing mechanisms, influencing factors, and organizational impacts of IFTs (Epitropaki et al., 2013; Whiteley et al., 2012).

Furthermore, ILT and IFT measures focus on the perceptual processes underlying leadership and followership. Members of an organization use their ILTs and IFTs as a benchmark to interpret the behavior of their dyad partner and subsequently guide their own behavior. Thus, much can be gained by understanding how members use their implicit theories to guide their actions (Lord & Brown, 2004). Epitropaki and Martin (2004) developed an explicit measure of ILT based on the work of Offerman et al. (1994). Sy (2010) consulted the methods used by these ILT researchers “in the development and validation of the IFTs instrument because their procedures followed extensive and rigorous validation processes” (p. 75). Notably, Sy (2010) found that the *leaders’* followership prototype was positively related to all *follower* outcomes (i.e., liking for leaders, relationship quality with leaders, trust in leaders, and job satisfaction) ...and all *leader* outcomes (i.e., liking for followers and relationship quality with

followers)" (p. 80). The results of his study produced support for the criterion validity of IFTs and,

> Suggest that IFTs are most accurately represented by a first-order six-factor structure that includes Industry, Enthusiasm, Good Citizen, Conformity, Insubordination, and Incompetence. IFTs also are accurately represented by a second-order two-factor structure: Followership Prototype (Industry, Enthusiasm, and Good Citizen) and Followership Antiprototype (Conformity, Insubordination, and Incompetence). (Sy, 2010, p. 81)

Moreover, the findings revealed that followers are perceived as *prototypic* when they are strong in industry, enthusiasm, and good citizenship, and *antiprototypic* when they are perceived as conformists, insubordinates, and incompetent.

A second IFT measure was developed by Carsten and Uhl-Bien (2009) relative to Sy's (2010) IFT research. Using a role-based view of followership, they validated a measure of co-production beliefs within the leadership process. They found that those with a stronger belief in co-production also "believe that followers are just as effectual as leaders and can significantly bolster the outcomes of the leadership process through their participation" (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2012, p. 211).

Current Empirical Literature

Regardless of the approach, the role of the follower and the construction of followership have proven to be a vital part of the leadership system. Consequently, "as postsecondary institutions offer courses and graduate degrees in leadership and management, the addition of a followership curriculum should be considered" (Baublits, 2014, p. 147). If considered, what does the framework for purposeful followership andragogy look like?

Hoption (2014) gave rise to this work by proposing case-based activities comprised of large group discussions, peer coaching, and one-on-one exercises to improve followership perceptions for college students. Her model addressed the negative connotations associated with the word follower and reversed the lens of these overtones. She recommended case teaching followed by a three-part exercise designed to provide students an opportunity to practice impactful followership behaviors. This experiential learning empowers students to experience the follower perspective and facilitates leadership development. “Empirical studies have noted the positive association between perspective-taking and effective leadership, suggesting that understanding followers’ perspectives augments positive leadership” (Hoption, 2014, section 4).

Tabak and Lebron (2017) mirrored Hoption’s (2014) followership curriculum through the implementation of an “experiential learning tool that allows students to practice different styles of followership while simultaneously focusing on developing the leader’s communication skills” (p. 199). They set up role-playing exercises by having students complete Kelley's (1992) Followership Questionnaire (KFQ) prior to simulating the leader-follower dyadic relationship based on a specific case exercise. This was followed by observer feedback, class discussions, and a series of debriefing questions “to connect the experiential exercise to leader-member exchange, followership, conflict resolution, and communication concepts” (Tabak & Lebron, 2017, p. 207). According to the authors, the exercise was well-received by the participants based on survey feedback and allowed the exploration of implicit leader and follower assumptions.

Although empirical research examining university leadership degree programs’ effectiveness on students' followership development is sparse, various studies have investigated the impact of leadership programs compared to other college experiences (Fischer et al., 2010). To illustrate, Fischer et al. (2015) conducted a study exploring changes in college students'

leadership thinking as a gauge of leadership development. In addition, they assessed the impact that demographics, college experiences, and participation in a leadership program had on these changes. As "colleges and universities have a number of factors to consider in planning where and how to effectively implement leadership development programming in order to enhance the leadership capacities of their students," this research added unique insight to the current study (Fischer et al., 2015, p. 15).

Fischer et al. (2015) used the Inspiring Leaders Certificate Program (ILCP) offered at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University as the focus of their study. The intent of the ILCP was to promote self-awareness, an understanding of self, and develop relationship-building skills. This "multimethod approach to leadership development, incorporating both cognitive and experiential methods," claimed to guide students to engage in the leadership process effectively (Fischer et al., 2015, p. 19). Their exploratory study utilized Wielkiewicz's (2000) LABS-III to measure changes in students' leadership attitudes and beliefs from their freshman to senior year. In addition, they analyzed the "differential impact of participation in a leadership certificate program, common college experiences, and demographic factors" (Fischer et al., 2015, p. 19).

The results supported the view that students generally start college with hierarchical leadership thinking and finish with systemic leadership thinking. These findings indicated that leadership programs positively affect leadership capacity and development. An interesting aspect of this research included the impact of the professional development certificate portion of the ILCP. This "was the only factor to significantly contribute to students' systemic leadership development" (Fischer et al., 2015, p. 26). The authors noted that the professional development certificate provided students with experiential learning, leadership challenges, and the

opportunity to be mentored by staff members. In essence, it created a leadership development culture that may have accelerated participating students' leadership capacity.

Synthesis of the Research Findings

The review of followership literature made it overarchingly clear that followership is an understudied and underappreciated topic. Moreover, a comprehensive search of academic databases related to followership revealed themes that showed followership research primarily conceptual in nature and lacking in empirical studies. Nevertheless, the previously mentioned reasons for neglecting the follower are outweighed by the recent interest in followership research. Even though today's comprehension of this construct emerged as a byproduct of leadership research, it transformed into a focus on follower typology, perceptions of followers, and the co-production of followership. This research must continue to expand to further an understanding of leadership and fully grasp the importance of followership within the leadership system.

Although the follower typologies outlined in this literature review vary in terminology, they are similar in their descriptors. Less adequate follower behaviors line up with low commitment and effectiveness levels as shown by Zaleznik's (1965) *withdrawn*, Kelley's (1988) *yes people* and *sheep*, Blackshear's (2004) *employee*, Lipman-Blumen's (2005) *benign follower*, Kellerman's (2008) *isolator* and *bystander*, and *passive follower typologies* by Carsten and collaborators (2010). The same can be said for exemplary follower behaviors that correlate with high commitment and effectiveness levels demonstrated by Kelley's (1988) *effective* follower, Chaleff's (2003) *partners*, Blackshear's (2004) *engaged and exemplary*, Kellerman's (2008) *diehards and activists*, and the social construction of *proactive follower typologies* by Carsten et

al. (2010). This continuum of follower behaviors has proven to correlate with the overall effectiveness levels of the follower.

Extending this knowledge by embedding followership within leadership curricula would prove beneficial in preparing students for future success. Although most of the current literature references case-study work, educators can close this gap by designing experiential activities around followership and the implicit assumptions about followers and leaders. “Such ‘learning by doing’ exercises can and should target multiple learning goals pertaining to both leadership and followership development” (Tabak & Lebron, 2017, p. 209). Kellerman (2008) expanded on this notion with the assertion that “it’s long overdue for academics and practitioners to adopt a more expansive view of leadership—one that sees leaders and followers as inseparable, indivisible, and impossible to conceive the one without the other” (para. 42).

Conclusion

As seen throughout this literature review, followership studies have been skewed toward quantitative and conceptual research. Qualitative and mixed methodologies are needed to reveal the multifaceted nature of followership. Furthermore, the trajectory of this research has gone from *who they are* to *what they do.* “Beyond paying lip service to the importance of followers, few scholars have attempted to theoretically specify and empirically assess the role of followers in the leadership process” (Howell & Shamir, 2005, p. 96). To bridge this gap, the researcher used a mixed-methods exploratory research design to gain insight into students’ beliefs, perceptions, and sense-making surrounding followership.

This information is not only essential for developing leadership capacity, but followership determines how leaders are perceived (Carsten et al., 2010); followership perceptions predict how a follower will follow (Carsten et al., 2010; Lord & Maher, 1991; Sy,

2010), and followership will inherently predict how a follower will lead (Koonce, 2013). This mixed-methods exploratory analysis fits with the researcher's pragmatist paradigm that reality is constantly changing, and multiple methods are needed to fully capture the followership phenomenon.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 2 provided an overview of the current literature on emerging leadership theories in relation to the follower, follower typology, the co-production of followership, and implicit followership theory related to this study. In addition, a synthesis of the research was described. The review provided a context that guided this study's research paradigm and approach. In addition, it frames the inclusion of followership within the leadership system. Chapter 3 will outline the research questions that guided this mixed-methods study, as well as a detailed description of the methodology used to conduct this research.

CHAPTER 3. METHODS

The purpose of this study was to explore how doctoral students in a formal leadership program conceptualize followership. An extensive review of the literature revealed a need to examine this within the context of higher education, particularly with doctoral-level students. In designing this study, the researcher adopted a pragmatic mixed-methods research paradigm. The pragmatist paradigm fits with the researcher's belief in exploring student attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of followership. The intent of mixing qualitative and quantitative data within this study was to "gather and analyze considerably more and different kinds of data" to develop a holistic picture of how students view followership within the leadership system (Fraenkel et al., 2019, p. 11). The objective was to see if the aforementioned variables "converge on a single interpretation of a phenomenon" (Fraenkel et al., 2019, p. 504). This chapter further details the methodology used in the study. It includes the following sections: research design and approach, setting and sample, validity, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, procedures, and ethical considerations.

Research Design and Approach

Within this mixed-methods study, the researcher used a combination of quantitative (i.e., survey research) and qualitative (i.e., instrumental case study) approaches to best answer the guiding research questions. The researcher concurrently analyzed quantitative data derived from the KFQ (Kelley, 1992), the LABS-III questionnaire (Wielkiewicz, 2000), and the IFT (Sy, 2010) measure with data collected from one-on-one interviews to further explore the research problem being investigated (see Table 1). This mixed research design matrix was an equal status, concurrent design: (QUAN + QUAL), known as the triangulation design (Fraenkel et al., 2019).

Table 1

Sub-Research Question Matrix

Sub Research Questions	Quantitative Measure	Qualitative Measure
Sub RQ 1: Followership Styles	KFQ (Kelley, 1992)	Interviews
Sub RQ 2: Attitudes/Beliefs	LABS-III (Wielkiewicz, 2000)	Interviews
Sub RQ 3: Perceptions	IFT (Sy, 2010)	Interviews

Note. Quantitative and qualitative measures.

For this research, data from the quantitative sequence was *qualitized*. Fraenkel et al. (2019) defined qualitizing as converting "quantitative data into qualitative data...for instance, individuals who share various quantitative characteristics may be grouped together into types" (p. 510). To illustrate, students' quantitative KFQ, LABS-III, and IFT scores put them into qualitative categories of followership styles, systemic or hierarchical thinking, and either a positive or negative perception of followers. This methodological triangulation assisted in offsetting "each method's respective weaknesses" (Fraenkel et al., 2019, p. 507). Furthermore, this pragmatic approach assisted in achieving epistemological status within the research and results, it enhanced the evidence, and provided a fuller, more resounding answer to the guiding research questions seen below (Briggs et al., 2012; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017).

Research Questions

RQ: How do doctoral students in a formal leadership program conceptualize followership?

- **Sub RQ 1:** What are the followership styles of doctoral students in a formal leadership program?
- **Sub RQ 2:** What are the leadership attitudes and beliefs among doctoral students in a formal leadership program?
- **Sub RQ 3:** What is the perception of followership among doctoral students in a formal leadership program?

Research Approach

The quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently through a Qualtrics (released August 2022) survey (i.e., quantitative) and interviews (i.e., qualitative). The quantitative approach determined students' followership style, leadership attitudes and beliefs, and the perceptions they have of followers. The qualitative approach aimed to examine this phenomenon within a bounded system to provide a general understanding and gain insight into how doctoral students in a formal leadership program conceptualize followership. Furthermore, combining the quantitative segments with qualitative interviews allowed the study of this phenomenon to determine if the two methods "converge upon a single understanding of the research problems being investigated" (Fraenkel et al., 2019, p. 507).

Setting and Sample

This mixed-methods study was conducted at a Midwestern, mid-sized, not-for-profit, four-year public institution within the Fall 2022 term. Total enrollment at the university was 4,624, with 3,695 undergraduate and 929 graduate-level students (B. Amenson-Hill, personal communication, September 15, 2022). Of these students, 36% identified as male and 64% as female. The majority of students were White (80%), while the remainder of the student body included Black or African American (5%), Hispanic/Latino (4%), Asian (2%), and American Indian or Alaska Native (1%). The 2020 United States Census Bureau reported an estimated population of 44,505, the largest city in northwest Minnesota.

Sampling Method

The researcher used convenience sampling at the site level and purposive sampling at the individual level to recruit participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The researcher chose the site due to their institutional employment and access to doctoral-level students. Participants were eligible

to partake in the study if they were degree-seeking doctoral students within the Department of Leadership and Learning and enrolled in a doctoral-level course at the target institution within the spring, summer, or fall 2022 term. The researcher verified participant eligibility through the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) at the case institution.

Purposive sampling was used for the qualitative sequence. Individuals across doctoral cohorts 3, 4, 5, and 6 were chosen to purposefully inform an understanding of the central research question. Participation was voluntary, and the target population was $N = 95$ students, which made up the total population of degree-seeking doctoral students within the aforementioned department.

A random sample of all university doctoral-level students was not used to conduct this study for a variety of reasons:

- The researcher did not have the time, money, or resources needed to conduct this study across the broader U.S. doctoral school population.
- The researcher had access to doctoral-level students through their institutional employment.
- The use of a convenience site-level and purposeful individual-level sampling method was preferable due to the vested interest in the findings at the researcher's institution.

The researcher assumed this sample of students would be more likely to participate in followership research because of their exposure to formal leadership theory, practice, and training. In addition, most doctoral students at the case institution work full-time while pursuing their degrees (B. Bradbury, personal communication, February 15, 2022). This would suggest they could draw upon their professional work experience while completing the survey.

Sample Size

As "there are usually multiple samples in mixed-methods studies," the researcher aimed for a minimum of 30 participants for the quantitative sample and five participants for the qualitative sample (Fraenkel et al., 2019, p. 510). According to Patton (2015), "There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry...in-depth information from a small number of people can be especially helpful in exploring a phenomenon and trying to document diversity or understand variation" (p. 311).

Quantitative

A total of 67 unique students participated in the quantitative survey, which resulted in an overall response rate of 70.52%. The majority (71.6%) of the respondents were female, while 26.9% were male. One respondent preferred not to respond to this question. The participants fell predominantly within the 26-41 age range (44.8%) or the 42-57 age range (50.7%). Of the respondents who reported ethnicity, the majority (89.5%) identified as White; the remaining respondents identified as Black or African American (6.0%), Asian (3%), and American Indian or Alaska Native (1.5%). The sample's demographics were consistent with those of the overall doctoral-level student population at the university.

Qualitative

Seven students agreed to participate in the qualitative sequence. In this sample, five identified as women (71.4%), and two identified as men (28.6%). Six participants were White (89.5%), and one was Black (14.3%). These seven participants ranged in age from 37-63.

Validity of Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Qualitative Sequence

Methods of Establishing a Researcher-Participant Working Relationship

The researcher for this study was an employee within the graduate studies department and a student in the Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in Educational Leadership at the case institution. Therefore, a working relationship had been established with members of the sample population within a student support role and, in some cases, a classmate. These relationships could implicitly impact the data collection and analysis procedures. The survey was confidential, and the researcher respected any power imbalances and created interview questions to allow the participants to lead with their thoughts and feelings surrounding followership. Furthermore, using a mixed-methods convergent design served to triangulate the data and further explore the results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). This methodological triangulation assisted in offsetting the weaknesses of using only one approach (i.e., quantitative or qualitative) and minimized potential biases within the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Fraenkel et al., 2019; Suárez Sousa & Bradbury, 2022).

On the other hand, qualitative research without positionality removes the lens of how a study has evolved, and the readers are left without a grounding for the significance behind the research (Darwin Holmes, 2020). Furthermore, “objectivity, authority, and validity of knowledge is challenged as the researcher’s positionality...is inseparable from the research findings” (Smith, 1999, p. 436). This leads to the question, what is the researcher’s positionality towards followership, and how have these perceptions formed?

Positionality

The answers to these questions are embedded within the researcher's identity and shaped by their environment. According to Creswell and Poth (2018),

> Qualitative researchers make their values known in a study. This is the axiological assumption that characterizes qualitative research...the inquirers admit the value-laden nature of the study and actively report their values and biases. We say that researchers "position themselves" by identifying their "positionality" in relation to the context and setting of the research. (p. 21)

Subsequently, as a white, cisgender woman who was raised in a mid-sized, predominantly White suburb within a middle-class socioeconomic status, the researcher had many experiences that shaped their views of reality. A unique aspect of this reality was growing up with an identical twin sister. This created a natural leader-follower dyad that allowed us to switch within and between roles throughout most of our upbringing.

Furthermore, their racial privilege allowed them to see the world through a lens that one has power and influence, regardless of hierarchical rank. Growing up in the early 90s allowed the researcher to participate in high school and collegiate sports as a female. This perception of the world and the opportunity to develop and grow within athletics have had a substantial impact on their thoughts and feelings toward the role of the follower and followership development.

Furthermore, as a former athlete and coach, the researcher had been immersed in an institution that stood on the foundation of followership. The organizational development focused on strengthening the team culture and all its members, and slowly, these ontological and epistemological assumptions emerged in how they trained, educated, and developed their team. This focus changed as a career within higher education took the researcher into different

branches of campus. Within these new experiences, the majority of development opportunities focused primarily on leadership skills and leadership literacy. There was a serious gap in any mention of the role of the follower, followership development, or how to become a more effective follower.

Ergo, the researcher's positionality toward followership has been shaped by their experiences, values, and biases. It has led to the realization that most organizations neglect follower development within leadership training and education. This was a motivating factor in developing this research. To circumvent this bias, the researcher sought out multiple perspectives, listened to the participants, and gave a voice to the contributors. In addition, throughout the data collection and analysis procedures, the researcher remained curious and open to the participants' beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions surrounding followership.

Credibility

The researcher used the recommended techniques by Fraenkel et al. (2019) to ensure credibility within the qualitative sequence of this study:

- The triangulation design allowed for both quantitative and qualitative instruments for data collection.
- The researcher learned to understand and speak the vocabulary of the participants while poring over their responses and recording personal thoughts throughout the data analysis.
- The researcher revisited patterns that did not fit to minimize or eliminate them.
- The researcher conducted member checks with the interview participants to ensure the accuracy of each transcript.

Quantitative Sequence

External Validity

As stated in Chapter 1 under delimitations, the use of convenience sampling at the site level and the overall representativeness of the participants limited this study. According to Fraenkel et al. (2019), whenever "convenience samples are used, generalization is made more plausible if data are presented to show that the sample is representative of the intended population on at least some relevant variables" (p. 104). The use of purposive sampling at the individual level resulted in the demographics of the sample population showing strong representativeness under the population of interest. Still, it was inadequate in generalizing across all doctoral-level students. Consequently, the generalizability of the quantitative results was strong within the population of interest (i.e., internal validity) but inadequate in terms of external validity.

Internal Validity

The researcher selected survey research for the quantitative sequence of this study. There was no intervention; therefore, "implementation, history, maturation, attitude of subjects, and regression" were not applicable threats (Fraenkel et al., 2019, p. 335). Additionally, mortality was not a threat within the study, as any lost participants were excluded. Further, the researcher required all questions within Qualtrics (released August 2022) to prevent any accidental incomplete surveys. However, because the questionnaire was administered electronically, the location differed for each participant, creating a possible threat to the study's internal validity. As this delivery method reached the largest number of participants, this specific threat could not be controlled, yet the likelihood of it having an effect unless controlled was low.

In addition, the online survey used a self-report method, which is considered an explicit measure. Self-reports allow participants time for deliberation, which may influence a more socially desirable response. In other words, participants may be leery of portraying negative biases toward followers, and therefore, these attitudes may not be fully captured within the data. The researcher attempted to limit this by ensuring the confidentiality of the respondents. Lastly, the instrument was only used once with the same subjects and could be completed within 15 minutes, minimizing instrument decay.

Instrumentation

Quantitative

For the quantitative sequence of this study, the researcher used the following empirically tested instruments; Kelley's Followership Questionnaire (KFQ) (1992), the Leadership Attitudes and Belief Scale - III (LABS-III) (Wielkiewicz, 2000), and the Implicit Followership Theory (IFT) measure (Sy, 2010). Permission to use these instruments was obtained via email from the principal investigators or publisher (see Appendix A). In addition, the resulting demographics were used to compare the sample to the target population. The survey and raw data collected for this study are in Appendix B and C, respectively.

Demographics and KFQ

Section I of the survey included four questions regarding demographics. Respondents were asked to indicate their gender, ethnicity, race, and age. Section II of the survey included a 20-item Likert scale that determined follower style using Kelley's Followership Questionnaire (KFQ) (1992). This Likert scale was adjusted from Kelley's (1992) original 0-6 Likert scale. Participants self-reported on a scale of 1 (rarely) to 7 (almost always) and were categorized "into one of five styles (i.e., exemplary, alienated, conformist, passive, or pragmatist) based on two

axes (independent thinking and active engagement)" (Northouse, 2019, p. 475). Both scales ranged from 10 to 70 by collecting the sum of participants' scores on the ten items associated with each scale.

Dawson and Sparks (2008) reported a Cronbach's alpha of 0.84., while Favara (2009) reported 0.87 overall and 0.77 for the independent thinking subscale and 0.86 for the active engagement subscale. According to Kelley (1992), the sum scores on each axis resulted in the following styles, as seen in Table 2.

Table 2

KFQ

Followership Style	Independent Thinking	Active Engagement
Exemplary	High	High
Alienated	High	Low
Conformist	Low	High
Pragmatist	Middling	Middling
Passive	Low	Low

Note. Taken from Kelley (1992).

LABS III

Section III of the survey included a 28-item Likert scale that measured leadership attitudes and beliefs using Wielkiewicz's (2000) LABS-III instrument. Participants were asked to rank each item to the extent they agree or disagree on a scale of 1 (strongly agree) – 5 (strongly disagree). The stronger the belief in hierarchical thinking, the lower the scores within the Hierarchical Thinking scale. Correspondingly, the stronger the belief in systemic thinking, the lower the scores within the Systemic Thinking scale. According to Lowhorn (2011), the LABS-III has "content validity but lacks discriminate validity with some questions, but it does load on two dimensions, as designed" (p. 284). Nevertheless, the LABS-III showed strong reliability

based on Cronbach's coefficient alpha score of 0.88 for the Hierarchical Thinking scale and 0.84 for the Systemic Thinking scale (Wielkiewicz, 2000).

IFT

Section IV of the survey included an 18-item Likert scale that measured perceptions of followership using Sy's (2010) IFT measure. This instrument included questions in which participants ranked each item on a scale of 1-10. Both scales ranged from 10 to 90 by collecting the sum of participants' scores on the nine items associated with each scale. The higher the Prototypic scale, the more positive view of followers; the higher the Antiprototypic scale, the more negative view of followers. Sy (2010) originally found Cronbach's coefficient alpha scores of 0.91 for the Prototypic scale and 0.78 for the Antiprototypic scale.

Qualitative

To conduct the interviews (i.e., qualitative sequence of this study), the researcher used semi-structured questions to elicit participants' thoughts and experiences of leadership and followership. Creswell and Poth (2018) specified that "interview questions are often the sub-questions in the research study, phrased in a way that interviewees can understand" (p. 164). Therefore, questions were paired with each quantitative measure to answer the sub-research questions further and triangulate the study.

Interview Guide

To make the participants feel at ease and stimulate conversation flow, the researcher started each interview with relationship-building questions (e.g., Can you tell me about your career path or What made you interested in pursuing your doctoral degree?). Next, questions ensued surrounding episodic memories of leadership and followership (e.g., "Think of a time someone in your organization displayed strong followership?"). These inquiries were followed

up with elaborative, clarification, and contrast probes to capture rich descriptions of the phenomenon (e.g., “Can you describe the context of the situation and the individual's behavior?”). Each interview followed a similar format to allow flexibility in exploring participants’ thoughts and experiences with leadership and followership. The interview guide for this study is in Appendix D.

Procedures

Gaining Access to Participants

The researcher was granted permission from the dean of the College of Education at the case institution to access the contact information of the target population. The researcher received the list of eligible participants through the Office of Institutional Effectiveness (OIE) database. Recruitment emails were sent to this list via the students’ school email accounts, inviting them to partake in the study.

Pilot Survey

In August 2022, the researcher emailed 339 graduate-level students in the Department of Leadership and Learning, inviting them to participate in a pilot study. A reminder email was sent two weeks later to those who had not completed the survey to please do so. The researcher used Qualtrics (released in August 2022), a web-based survey instrument, to generate a link to the questionnaire. Of the 339 possible participants, 70 students completed it, none of which were part of the target group.

The instructions, order, and flow of questions within the survey were examined. The data were exported to SPSS (Version 26), and the results were reviewed. Slight adjustments were made to the Qualtrics (released in August 2022) questionnaire following the pilot study, which included combining all 28 questions from Kelley’s (1992) Followership Questionnaire into one

section, adjusting the consent form information to reflect the target group name, and an updated timeline for the study. The final Qualtrics survey comprised 70 total items (see Appendix B).

Data Collection

Quantitative

Initial recruitment for the quantitative portion of this study began in September 2022 and was completed within three weeks. All qualifying doctoral-level students were sent an email conveying the details of the study (see Appendix E). Care was taken to protect the confidentiality of all respondents. Each student received a unique Qualtrics (released in August 2022) link and had the option to opt out of future email communication.

Students who had not yet completed the survey, identified by the Qualtrics (released in August 2022) software, were sent weekly follow-up emails. Eligible participants were provided information on the consent process and then asked, without intervention, to voluntarily self-report how they conceptualize followership. The survey was delivered through an electronically delivered Qualtrics questionnaire using three empirically tested quantitative instruments. A final recruitment email was sent three weeks later. Following the third week, the survey was closed, and the data were downloaded.

Qualitative

Recruitment for the qualitative portion of this study spanned from September 2022 to October 2022. The researcher recruited participants who could offer various experiences across four doctoral cohorts. The researcher followed up with all students willing to participate in the interviews to determine the date, time, and location. In addition, detailed information on the study, the interview procedures, and the study's consent form were sent via email. Each participant was assigned a pseudonym within this dissertation to protect their identity.

Quantitative and Qualitative Sample Size

The researcher secured 67 (n = 67) completed questionnaires and conducted seven (n = 7) interviews. All data were stored securely on a password-protected laptop to protect participant confidentiality. The researcher retained a printed copy for memoing, coding, and interpreting the data in addition to the electronic files. All paper files were in a locked home office; all electronic files were on a password-protected laptop.

Data Analysis

Quantitative

The statistical analysis used within the quantitative portion of this study included descriptive statistics. Descriptive information on demographics (i.e., gender, race/ethnicity, and age) was collected. The ratio data were summarized using measures of central tendency (i.e., mean, median) and measures of dispersion/variability (i.e., standard deviation, range). The nominal, ordinal, and interval data were summarized using frequencies. Composite scores were gathered for each dimension of the KFQ (Kelley, 1992), LABS-III (Wielkiewicz, 2000), and IFT (Sy, 2010) measures to place students within a specific followership style for the KFQ measure, hierarchical or systemic thinking for the LABS-III scale, and prototypic or antiprototypic IFT category.

Qualitative

To align with the quantitative measures, the researcher utilized deductive (a priori codes) and open and axial coding for the qualitative data analysis process. A priori codes of *exemplary, alienated, conformist, pragmatist,* and *passive* were used for Sub-Research Question 1: Followership Style (Kelley, 1992). A priori codes of *hierarchical thinking* and *systemic thinking* were used for Sub-Research Question 2: Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs (Wielkiewicz, 2000).

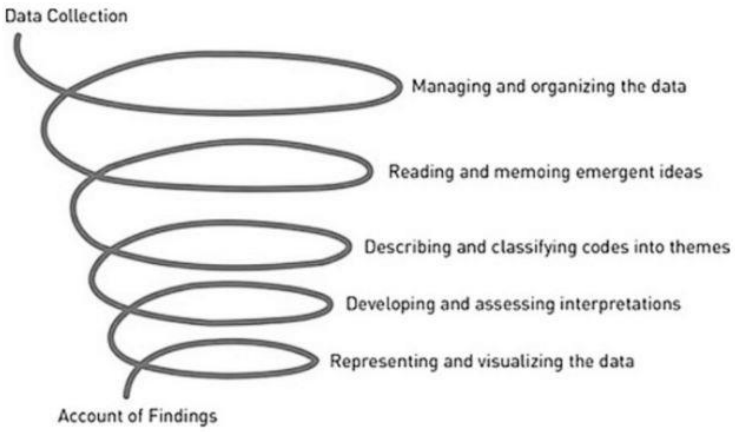
A priori codes of *prototypic* and *antiprototypic* were used for Sub-Research Question 3: Perceptions of Followership (Sy, 2010). These initial codes were used to organize the emerging themes into categories and triangulate the study.

Data Analysis Spiral

The researcher employed Creswell and Poth's (2018) data analysis spiral to capture the emerging themes (see Figure 6). These steps are detailed in this section.

Figure 6

Data Analysis Spiral



Note. Taken from Creswell and Poth, 2018.

Managing and Organizing the Data

"Qualitative research often produces large quantities of descriptive information from field notes or interviews...the information needs to be organized, and through this organization, there should be data reduction" (Wiersma, 2000, p. 203). Therefore, as the data collection procedures began, the researcher started to manage, organize, and convert the data "for long-term secure file storage" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 186). This process allowed for the data to be organized and analyzed by hand and using NVivo (released in March 2020) software.

Reading and Memoing Emerging Ideas

Once the data were organized and the transcripts printed, the researcher pored over the pages with an open mind to discover recurring themes that could answer the guiding research questions. During this stage, the researcher listened to each recording while making notes. This process was repeated while simultaneously reading the transcripts. Next, the researcher read the transcripts without the audio. Notes were made in the side margins, and repeating themes were circled to assist the overall data analysis procedures. The researcher reviewed the documents multiple times with a highlighter to allow new themes to surface. This process was supported by Bazeley's (2013) method of "read, reflect, play, and explore strategies" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 187).

Segment memos were identified using a different highlighter to capture content-based phrases from each participant. "Memoing helps track development of ideas through the process. This, in turn, lends credibility to the qualitative data analysis process and outcomes" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 189). Each memo was labeled and dated for future memo retrieval. After memoing and highlighting themes, the researcher read the notes without the accompanying transcriptions. This process allowed the researcher to narrow their focus and identify possible codes. "Coding is a process of organizing data and obtaining data reduction. In essence, it is the process by which qualitative researchers see what they have in the data" (Wiersma, 2000, p. 203).

Describing and Classifying Codes into Themes

Codes. The method of "forming codes or categories...represents the heart of qualitative data analysis" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 189). Creswell and Poth (2018) recommended that researchers start with five or six categories to simplify the coding process (i.e., lean coding). Therefore, possible categories were made in the side margins and transferred into a separate

document to winnow the data. Then, diagrams were created to visually represent relationships and avoid possible overlap of ideas. The researcher became immersed in the transcripts, memos, diagrams, and auxiliary notes as one large data set. These data were reviewed multiple times to expand the code list. The categories were entered into NVivo (released in March 2020) software as preliminary codes along with all files (i.e., audio, transcripts, drawings, and diagrams). The researcher's handwritten memos were uploaded into NVivo's (released in March 2020) memo file, which was kept separate from any source data files. These memos were reviewed and linked to their associated codes.

The process of memoing and coding continued as the researcher read through each transcript in NVivo (released in March 2020) and used the *highlighting* and *coding* features to drag content phrases, quotes, and participant drawings into their associated codes. Once completed, each code file was reviewed for content, intersections, and co-occurrence of themes. A *crosstab query* was run to determine how the coding was distributed across each participant file. The researcher reviewed how many interviewees and how often each interviewee referred to the related topic. The coding frequencies within and across interviews were used to determine the degree of support for each code. Sufficient support for a code was assumed if a coding frequency greater than five was generated.

Themes. The final codes were classified into general themes. “Themes in qualitative research (also called categories) are broad units of information that consist of several codes aggregated to form a common idea” (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 194). Throughout the coding and theming process, the researcher followed Bazeley’s (2013) strategies for developing themes: (a) memoing thematic ideas, (b) highlighting notable quotes, and (c) creating concept diagrams to

visualize relationships and patterns among the codes. This process was repeated by hand and in NVivo (released in March 2020) until the researcher discerned data saturation had been met.

Developing and Assessing Interpretations

The final themes were organized "into larger units of abstraction to make sense of the data" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 195). A concept map (i.e., a diagram) was used to visually represent the data. In addition, the researcher obtained peer feedback to ensure the patterns were clearly articulated.

Representing and Visualizing the Data

The data analysis spiral concluded with a visual representation of the findings. This provided the framework for writing the thematic interpretations presented in Chapters 4 and 5.

Data Triangulation

The quantitative and qualitative approaches were combined into one data set and interpreted equally, which assisted in validating the overall findings. Methodological triangulation was achieved by *qualitizing* the quantitative data (i.e., students' followership style, their leadership attitudes and beliefs, and their perceptions of followership) and comparing the results with the themes that emerged within the interviews. These results were examined concurrently to triangulate the study and provide a holistic understanding of how doctoral students in a formal leadership program conceptualize followership.

Ethical Considerations

Permission and IRB Approval

This study has undergone Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval and was classified as "no possible risk to adult participants" (Fraenkel et al., 2019, p. 69). In addition, the researcher sought administrator authorization to conduct this study on their campus (see Appendix F). In

following the ethical principles outlined in *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education* (Fraenkel et al., 2019), the researcher carefully evaluated the study for the following ethical concerns:

- The participants sampled were not deceived.
- Prior to conducting the study, the participants were informed of all aspects of the research preceding consent.
- The researcher respected the rights of anyone who refused to participate or withdraw from the study at any point in time.
- The researcher did not have the authority or influence over any participants, nor were they at risk of any physical, mental, or emotional harm from participating in the study.

Informed Consent

The protection of human subjects involved in this research was assured. Minor participants were not a part of this study. Participants knew this study was conducted as part of the researcher's doctoral degree program and benefited their professional practice. Informed consent meant the target sample was fully informed of the purpose and procedures of the study for which consent was sought, and the students understood and agreed, electronically, to participate in the study (Rothstein & Johnson, 2014). Furthermore, any information obtained in connection with this study that could be identified with each participant remained confidential and was not disclosed. To help protect the confidentiality of participants, any personally identifiable information was purged from surveys and research reports, and pseudonyms were assigned.

Conclusion

Chapter 3 detailed the methodology used within this study and included the following sections: research design and approach, setting and sample, validity, instrumentation, data collection, data analysis, procedures, and ethical considerations. As noted throughout this chapter, the quantitative and qualitative data were collected concurrently through a mixed-methods triangulation design. This was determined as the best approach to answer the guiding research questions. The quantitative data conveyed students' followership style, leadership attitudes and beliefs, and their perceptions of followership. The qualitative data provided insight into students' feelings and experiences surrounding leadership and followership. All data were analyzed together to forge a holistic understanding of how students conceptualize followership. Chapters 4 and 5 will reveal the study results and provide discussion and recommendations.

CHAPTER 4. FINDINGS

According to Burns (1978), “Leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth” (p. 2). Consequently, leadership approaches are continually evolving to keep pace with the demands of society and the technological advancements of the 21st century (Kellerman, 2018a). Leadership education is at the forefront of this evolution, becoming a staple in university programs of study in the late 1990s and exploding into the interdisciplinary, cross-cultural, and globalized field of research we see today (Tolstikov-Mast et al., 2022). However, if leadership is defined as a *process* of reciprocal influence between leader(s) and follower(s), it must be developed by both the leader and the led (Komives et al., 2007). Despite this, leadership development typically focuses on the leader, and little is known about the role of the follower or followership (Foley, 2015; Riggio, 2020).

Purpose of the Study

This mixed-methods research aimed to explore how doctoral students in a formal leadership program conceptualize followership. Quantitative data addressing demographics, followership style, leadership attitudes and beliefs, and perceptions of followership were collected through a Qualtrics (released in August 2022) survey and analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26) predictive analytics software. Qualitative data addressing thoughts and experiences of leadership and followership were collected through one-on-one interviews. As noted in Chapter 3, the data were analyzed using Creswell and Poth's (2018) data analysis spiral and NVivo (released in March 2020) software. The quantitative measures were qualitized to compare with the thematic interpretations that emerged from the qualitative data. The rationale

behind using this mixed-methods approach was that it "provides a better understanding of research problems than either approach alone" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 5).

One research question and three sub-questions guided this exploratory, mixed-methods study:

RQ: How do doctoral students in a formal leadership program conceptualize followership?

- **Sub RQ 1:** What are the followership styles of doctoral students in a formal leadership program?
- **Sub RQ 2:** What are the leadership attitudes and beliefs among doctoral students in a formal leadership program?
- **Sub RQ 3:** What is the perception of followership among doctoral students in a formal leadership program?

System Alignment

Table 3 presents the system alignment between the research questions, methods, and analysis used in this study.

Table 3

System Alignment

Research Questions	Variables	Instrument QUAN	Design/Instrument QUAL	Data Analysis QUAN+QUAL
Sub RQ 1 Followership Styles	Critical Thinking Active Engagement	Kelley's (1992) KFQ Scale	Case Study/ Interviews	**QUAN** Descriptive Statistics **QUAL** Thematic Interpretations
Sub RQ 2 Leadership Attitudes & Beliefs	Hierarchical Thinking Scale Systemic Thinking Scale	Wielkiewicz's (2000) LABS-III Scale	Case Study/ Interviews	**QUAN** Descriptive Statistics **QUAL** Thematic Interpretations
Sub RQ 3 Perceptions of Followership	Prototypic Scale Antiprototypic Scale	Sy's (2010) IFT Scale	Case Study/ Interviews	**QUAN** Descriptive Statistics **QUAL** Thematic Interpretations
RQ Followership Conceptualized	Followership Style, Leadership, Attitudes and Beliefs, Followership Perceptions	Qualitized KFQ, LABS III, IFT	Thematic Interpretations	**QUAN+QUAL** Qualitized QUAN + Thematic Interpretations

Note. Source = Doctoral Students in a Formal Leadership Program.

This chapter presents the findings of this study. It is organized by a) participant demographics, b) qualitative data collection and analysis procedures, c) quantitative data

collection and analysis procedures, d) results for each sub-research question, and e) concluding remarks. The convergent analysis of the quantitative and qualitative results was used to interpret the central research question. This interpretation is discussed in Chapter 5.

Participant Demographics

The researcher used convenience sampling at the site level and purposive sampling at the individual level. Convenience sampling was used to recruit participants at the researcher's place of employment. Purposive sampling was used to target degree-seeking doctoral students within the Department of Leadership and Learning at a mid-sized, Midwestern public university. The aim of the qualitative sequence was to gain insight from students in four different cohorts with varying levels of age, industry experience, direct reports, and formal leadership education. Using these objectives, the researcher recruited specific participants from the sample population to participate in the qualitative sequence. This follows Creswell and Poth's (2018) position that the heterogeneity of participants allows for "different perspectives on the problem, process, or event" (p. 100).

At the time of this study, 95 doctoral students were registered during the 2022 terms (i.e., spring, summer, or fall). Of the 95 students, 67 completed the Qualtrics (released in August 2022) survey, and seven were selected based on heterogeneity for the one-on-one interviews. Demographic data for the quantitative and qualitative sequences are detailed in the next section.

Quantitative

There were 67 completed surveys, which comprised 48 women (71.6%), 18 men (26.9%), and one student (1.5%) who preferred not to state their gender identity. Participants selected age ranges from 21 to 67**,** with the majority of respondents (50.7%) ranging in age from 42 to 57 (M = 42.54, SD = 2.82). In this sample, 60 students described themselves as White

(89.5%), four as Black or African American (6.0%), two as Asian (3.0%), and one as American Indian or Alaska Native (1.5%). Participant demographics for the quantitative sequence are summarized in Tables 4-6.

Table 4

Gender Identity

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	18	26.9	26.9	26.9
Female	48	71.6	71.6	71.6
Prefer Not to Say	1	1.5	1.5	100.0
Total	67	100.0	100.0	

Note. Source: Doctoral Students in a Formal Leadership Program, *n* = 67.

Table 5

Age Range

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
21-25	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
26-41	30	44.8	44.8	46.3
42-57	34	50.7	50.7	97.0
58-67	2	3.0	3.0	100.0
Total	67	100.0	100.0	

Note. Source: Doctoral Students in a Formal Leadership Program, *n* = 67.

Table 6

Race/Ethnicity

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
Asian	2	3.0	3.0	4.5
Black or African American	4	6.0	6.0	10.5
White	60	89.5	89.5	100.00
Total	67	100.0	100.0	

Note. Source: Doctoral Students in a Formal Leadership Program, *n* = 67.

Qualitative

Pseudonyms were assigned to each interview participant. Seven students participated in the qualitative sequence, which comprised five women (71.4%) and two men (28.5%). In this sample, six participants were White (85.7%), and one was Black or African American (14.2%). The students ranged in age from 37 to 63 (M = 43.8, SD =8.9). Participant demographics for the qualitative sequence are summarized in Tables 7-9.

Table 7

Gender Identity

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	2	28.6	28.6	28.6
Female	5	71.4	71.4	100.0
Total	7	100.0	100.0	

Note. Source: Doctoral Students in a Formal Leadership Program, n = 7.

Table 8

Race/Ethnicity

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
White	6	85.7	85.7	85.7
Black or African American	1	14.3	14.3	100.0
Total	7	100.0	100.0	

Note. Source: Doctoral Students in a Formal Leadership Program, n = 7.

Table 9

Demographic Summary of the Qualitative Sample (Interview)

Gender Identity	Race	Age Range	Position	Industry Years of Experience
Woman	White	26-41	Director	1
Woman	White	26-41	Director	17
Woman	White	42-57	Professor	20
Man	White	26-41	Director	16
Woman	Black	58-67	Professor	22
Man	White	42-57	Director	23
Woman	White	42-57	Director	21

Note. Source: Doctoral Students in a Formal Leadership Program, $n = 7$.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The qualitative sequence aimed to capture students' thoughts and experiences surrounding followership using a case study research design. "The unique contribution of a case study approach is that it provides the researcher with a holistic understanding of a problem, issue, or phenomenon within its social context" (Nagy Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 256).

Researcher Bias

Qualitative research must "make explicit the researcher's assumptions as related to the phenomenon being studied" (Suárez-Sousa & Bradbury, 2022, p. 104). As noted in Chapter 3, the researcher has a strong bias toward the importance of followership within the leadership system. Subsequently, the researcher adopted a follower-centric, post-industrial leadership framework throughout this study with the intent to extend current followership literature.

In recognizing this bias, the researcher followed "practices associated with epoché" to bracket themself from the research to explore the followership phenomenon from multiple

perspectives (Suárez-Sousa & Bradbury, 2022, p. 7). For instance, throughout the data collection and analysis procedures, the researcher monitored their bias, remained open to responses, began to understand and speak the vocabulary of the participants, and revisited patterns that did not fit (Fraenkel et al., 2019). Although the researcher included interpretive commentaries and reflections (i.e., etic perspective), "the phenomenology of participants (i.e., emic perspective)" heavily supported the narrative of results (Suárez Sousa & Bradbury, 2022, p. 103).

Data Collection

As noted above, seven doctoral students agreed to participate in the one-on-one interviews. The researcher contacted these students via their student email addresses, which were provided by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness at the target institution. This email included information about the study, the interview procedures, the informed consent document, and possible dates and times of the interview (see Appendix G).

Thick Site Description

The seven participants represented each of the doctoral cohorts. These students came from a wide range of career industries, including college faculty, global engagement, student orientation, enrollment services, athletics, wellness, and healthcare. In addition, the participants have held various types, levels, and experiences within their professions. The objective was to tap into the varying career and educational experiences of these students.

The location, dates, and times were confirmed with each participant to conduct the semi-structured interviews. The sites included the participants' work offices, the researcher's home office, and Zoom conferences. The objective was to have a quiet and private setting where the participants would feel comfortable and an environment conducive to obtaining a clear audio recording. In-person interviews were recorded using the Voice Recorder Application (Version 3)

and uploaded into the researcher's password-protected Microsoft 365 (Version 4.51) account for transcription. For the virtual interviews, a calendar invite was sent out with a link and a passcode to a Zoom meeting. This meeting was recorded using the Zoom (Version 5.6.7) platform. As with the in-person interviews, the audio recordings were uploaded to the researcher's password-protected Microsoft 365 account for transcription. This transcript was then compared to the audio and video recordings, respectively.

An interview protocol guided each interview (see Appendix D). The researcher began with relationship questions to make the participants feel comfortable and stimulate discussion. The researcher made notes throughout their printed interview protocol guide related to the participant responses. In addition, memos were made in the side margins related to participant body language, gestures, and vocal cues.

The transcripts were edited where necessary (the researcher omitted filler words, such as "uh" or "you know," unless their inclusion was necessary to the overall understanding of the statement). The finalized transcripts were sent to each participant to verify their accuracy, in which one participant indicated minor changes that were rectified. Data verification is a standard of research quality called *member checking*. "Using member checks at one or multiple points...allow the participants of your study to confirm the credibility of the data" (Suárez-Sousa & Bradbury, 2022, p. 104). Copies of each transcript were printed for memoing and coding purposes. These paper copies were stored in the researcher's locked home office in a locked drawer with only the pseudonyms as identifiers.

Data Analysis

As noted in Chapter 3, the researcher employed deductive, open, and axial coding throughout the thematic analysis process. Kelley's (1992) *exemplary, alienated, conformist,*

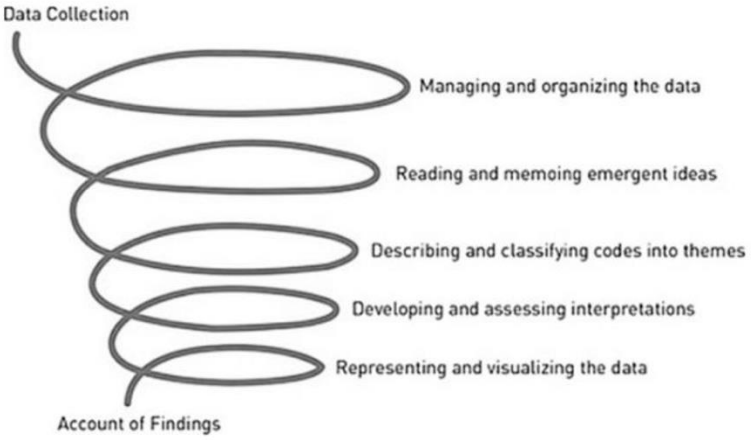
pragmatist, and *passive* followership styles were used as a priori codes for the first sub-research question (Sub RQ 1), Wielkiewicz's (2000) *hierarchical thinking* and *systemic thinking* for the second sub-research question (Sub RQ 2), and Sy's (2010) *prototypic* and *antiprototypic* were used for the third sub-research question (Sub RQ 3). These codes categorized the themes that emerged from the data to triangulate the study. They are defined within the codebook found in Appendix H.

The researcher utilized Creswell and Poth's (2018) five-step data analysis spiral (see Figure 7) to capture additional themes that emerged from the interviews. As Creswell and Poth (2018) noted,

> Data analysis is not off-the-shelf; rather, it is custom-built, revised, and "choreographed" ...the process of data collection, data analysis, and report writing are not distinct steps in the process---they are interrelated and often go on simultaneously in a research project. (p. 185)

Figure 7

Data Analysis Spiral



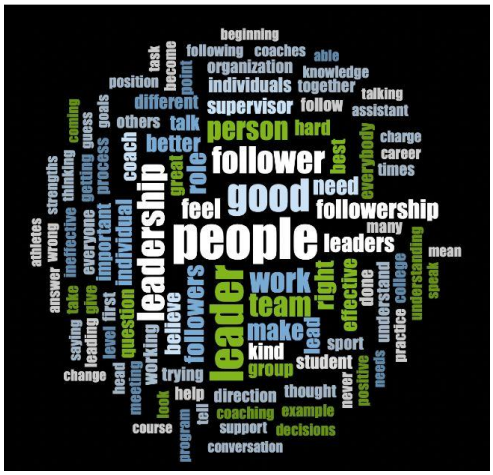
Note. Taken from Creswell and Poth, 2018.

The researcher started this process by hand to allow themes to emerge. Patterns were "built from the *bottom-up* by organizing the data inductively into increasingly more abstract units of information" (Creswell & Poth, 2018, p. 43). All files (i.e., audio, transcripts, memos, notes, drawings, and diagrams) were then uploaded into NVivo (released in March 2020), a secure software program for qualitative and mixed-methods research. The researcher used NVivo to organize, classify, interpret, and visually represent the data.

During this process, the researcher ran a *word frequency query* for the top 100 words throughout the transcripts to identify the most frequently occurring words (see Figure 8). In addition, words and concepts were analyzed within the text search query to create word trees (see Figure 9). These queries were reviewed to generate additional codes.

Figure 8

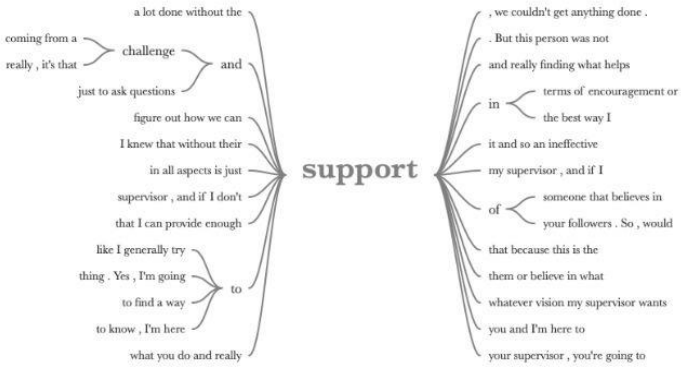
Word Frequency Query



Note. NVivo word cloud example.

Figure 9

Word Tree Query



Note. NVivo word tree example.

Next, the coding frequencies within and across interviews were used to determine the degree of support for each code. The researcher ran a *crosstab* query to visualize the coding support across all participant files (e.g., transcripts). Figure 10 presents a heat map of the crosstab query for coding within Followership Style.

Figure 10

Followership Style Crosstab Query

Followership Style Heat Map

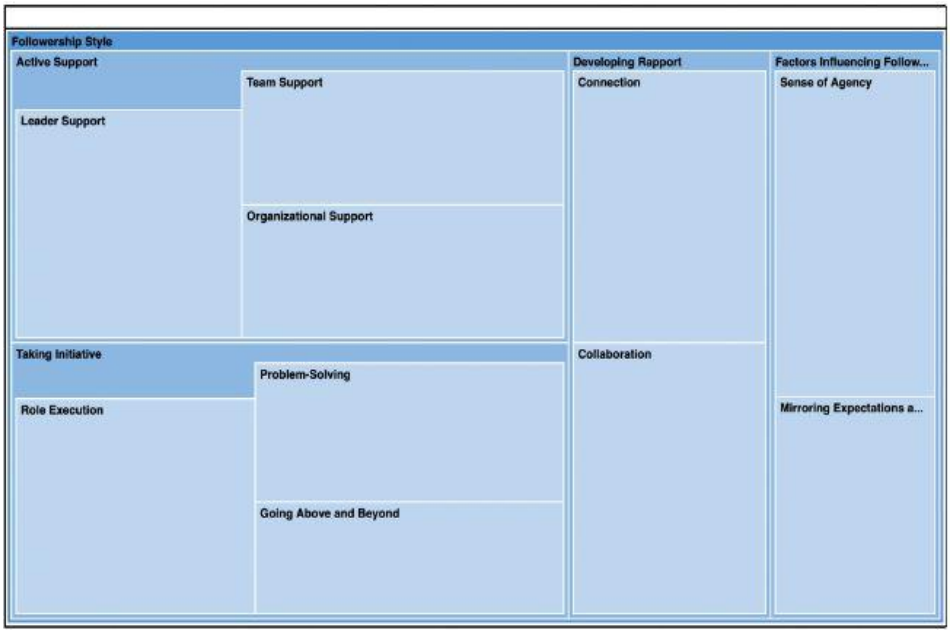
Codes	Drew	Jade	Jesse	Kevin	Korinne	Maggie	Tripp	Total
Followership Style	8	16	20	26	24	11	12	117
Active Support	3	7	6	13	9	2	3	43
Leader Support	1	4	5	5	2	2	0	19
Organizational Support	1	3	0	4	3	0	1	12
Team Support	1	0	1	4	3	0	2	11
Developing Rapport	2	5	5	6	7	5	1	31
Collaboration	1	5	1	1	6	2	0	16
Connection	1	0	4	5	3	3	1	17
Factors Influencing Followership Style	2	4	11	2	2	3	6	30
Mirroring Expectations and Behaviors	0	0	8	0	2	1	2	13
Sense of Agency	2	4	3	2	0	2	5	18
Taking Initiative	2	5	2	6	9	1	3	28
Going Above and Beyond	1	0	1	3	0	0	1	6
Problem-Solving	0	2	1	0	4	1	1	9
Role Execution	1	3	1	3	1	0	1	10
Total	26	58	69	80	75	33	39	380

Note. NVivo heat map example.

Sufficient support for a code was assumed if a total coding frequency greater than five was generated. The researcher then created tree maps to visualize and identify prominent themes (see Figure 11).

Figure 11

Followership Style Coding Comparison



Note. NVivo tree map example.

Finally, the researcher aggregated the coding from *child codes* to visualize the recurring themes and associated codes for each sub-research question. An example of this visualization is presented in Figure 12. This data analysis continued until the researcher discerned that data saturation had been met.

Figure 12

Aggregated Coding Visualization

Note. NVivo aggregated child codes and recurring themes example.

As seen in Appendix H, codes were organized by each sub-research question. They were labeled and described with examples from the study to create the finalized codebook (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These codes were classified into general themes for each sub-research question. A concept map (i.e., a diagram) was used to visually represent the data and will be presented at the end of each result section. In addition, the researcher obtained peer feedback to ensure the patterns were clearly articulated.

Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

The quantitative sequence aimed to determine students' followership style, leadership attitudes and beliefs, and their perceptions of followership through a survey design.

> Survey research has the main focus of collecting data on specific issues...with the purpose of describing the profile of the population who have experienced those issues according to demographic variables of interest (e.g., race, age, level of education, occupation). (Suárez-Sousa & Bradbury, 2022, p. 163)

The variables of interest in this study included doctoral-level education within a formal leadership program.

Data Collection

An email with a unique link to a Qualtrics (released in August 2022) questionnaire was sent in September 2022 to all doctoral students at the research site (N = 95) who were registered during the spring, summer, or fall 2022 term. This link remained active for three weeks. Students who had not participated in the survey were sent reminder emails through Qualtrics software each week until the survey closed. The researcher sent thank you emails to those who completed the survey. Students could opt out of future communication through a Qualtrics link embedded within the recruitment email. The survey's response rate (70.52%) is displayed in Table 10.

Table 10

Calculation of Return Rate

Elements of the Formula	Results
Primary Rejection: The invitation to participate was not returned (R1)	25
Secondary Rejection: Incomplete survey (R2)	3
Total of participants who responded to the survey (*n*)	67
Response Rate *n*/(R1+R2+*n)* * 100	70.52 %

Note. Source: Doctoral Students in a Formal Leadership Program, *n* = 67.

The data were exported from Qualtrics (released in August 2022) and downloaded into IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26) predictive analytics software. The researcher cleaned the database, removed incomplete datasets, categorized the variables, and organized the data. Compute variables were added for each dimension within the three scales (i.e., KFQ (Kelley, 1992), LABS-III (Wielkiewicz, 2000), and IFT (Sy, 2010)) using their corresponding items before running the analysis (see Table 11).

Table 11

Composite Scores

Quantitative Scale Dimensions	Corresponding Items
KFQ Critical Thinking	1, 5, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20
KFQ Active Engagement	2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 13, 15
LABS-III Hierarchical Thinking	3, 6, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 25, 27, 28
LABS-III Systemic Thinking	1, 2, 4, 5, 9, 11, 12, 14, 18, 19, 20, 23, 24, 26
IFT Prototypic	1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 14, 15, 18
IFT Antiprototypic	2, 3, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17

Note. Composite scores and corresponding survey items (see Appendix B).

Once the data were cleaned and the compute variables added, the researcher ran the analysis through IBM SPSS Software (Version 26) to analyze the results. An output page was generated, which displayed the results in terms of frequencies and measures of dispersion/variability.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to conduct the quantitative data analysis. Descriptive information on participant demographics was collected through Qualtrics (released in August 2022) software with responses to the three quantitative scales (i.e., Kelley's (1992) KFQ, Wielkiewicz's (2000) LABS-III, and Sy's (2010) IFT scales). The ratio data were summarized using measures of central tendency (i.e., median, mean, mode) and measures of dispersion or variability (i.e., standard deviation, range, variance). This is because "measures of central tendency are not adequate to describe data…[as]…two data sets can have the same mean, but they can be entirely different" (Manikandan, 2011, p. 315). The nominal, ordinal, and interval data were summarized using frequencies.

Composite scores were gathered for each dimension within the three quantitative scales (see Table 12). These results were then qualitized to complement and expand the qualitative findings. This process categorized participants within a specific followership style (i.e.,

exemplary, alienated, conformist, pragmatist, or passive), leadership attitude and belief (i.e., systemic thinking or hierarchical thinking), and perception of followership (i.e., prototypic or antiprototypic).

Table 12

Descriptive Statistics

	KFQ IT	KFQ AE	LABS HT	LABS ST	IFT PT	IFT AP
n	67	67	67	67	67	67
Mean	55.7761	58.0299	43.4478	23.0299	64.3134	32.1493
Median	56.0000	59.0000	44.0000	24.0000	66.0000	30.0000
Mode	60.00	56.00a	47.00	24.00	58.00a	22.00a
Std. Deviation	6.19340	6.71265	6.51870	4.36574	12.78044	13.14056
Skewness	-.117	-1.722	.138	-.087	-.533	.614
Std. Error of Skewness	.293	.293	.293	.293	.293	.293
Kurtosis	-.211	5.939	.347	-.193	.363	-.145
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.578	.578	.578	.578	.578	.578
Range	27.00	42.00	33.00	20.00	61.00	53.00
Minimum	42.00	27.00	28.00	14.00	29.00	13.00
Maximum	69.00	69.00	61.00	34.00	90.00	66.00
Qualitized Results	Exemplary			Systemic	Prototypic	

Note. Composite scores for each dimension within the three quantitative scales.

Results

This section presents the quantitative and qualitative data results, organized by each sub-research question. Methodological triangulation was achieved by converging the qualitized quantitative results with the thematic interpretations of the qualitative data. All data were analyzed concurrently. This analysis was used as a guide for interpreting how students in a formal leadership program conceptualize followership (i.e., this study's central research question). The interpretation of the results is presented in Chapter 5.

Sub RQ 1 Quantitative Results

What are the Followership Styles of Doctoral Students in a Formal Leadership Program?

To explore the followership styles of doctoral students in a formal leadership program, the researcher examined data from Section II of the Qualtrics (released in August 2022) survey, which contained a seven-point, 20-item Likert scale that measured followership style using Kelley's (1992) Followership Questionnaire (KFQ). As noted in Chapter 3, Kelley's (1992) KFQ measure loads on two factors: Independent Thinking (IT) and Active Engagement (AE).

A composite score was calculated for each of the two KFQ factors. These scores were based on participant responses on a scale valued from one (rarely) to seven (almost always). This scale was adjusted from Kelley's (1992) original Likert scale of zero (rarely) to six (almost always). The highest possible score for each KFQ factor was 70; the lowest possible score was ten. Analysis of the sample data revealed a minimum score reported of 42 for KFQ IT and 27 for KFQ AE, with a maximum reported score of 69 for KFQ IT and 69 for KFQ AE. The mean score for all participants for KFQ IT was 55.78 (M =55.78, SD = 6.19), and KFQ AE was 58.03 (M = 58.03, SD = 6.71); The distribution of results of each can be seen in Figures 13 and 14**,** respectively.

Figure 13

KFQ IT Score Distribution

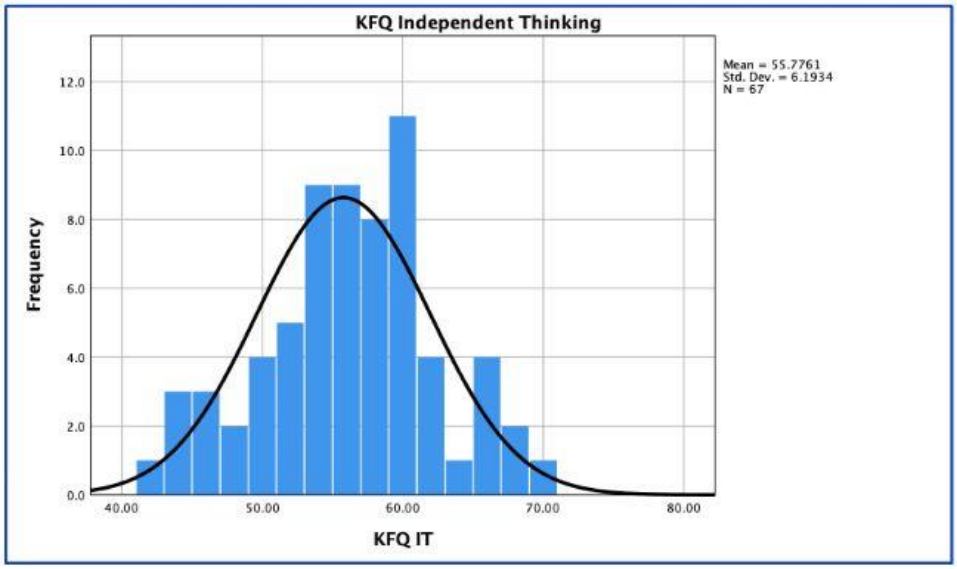
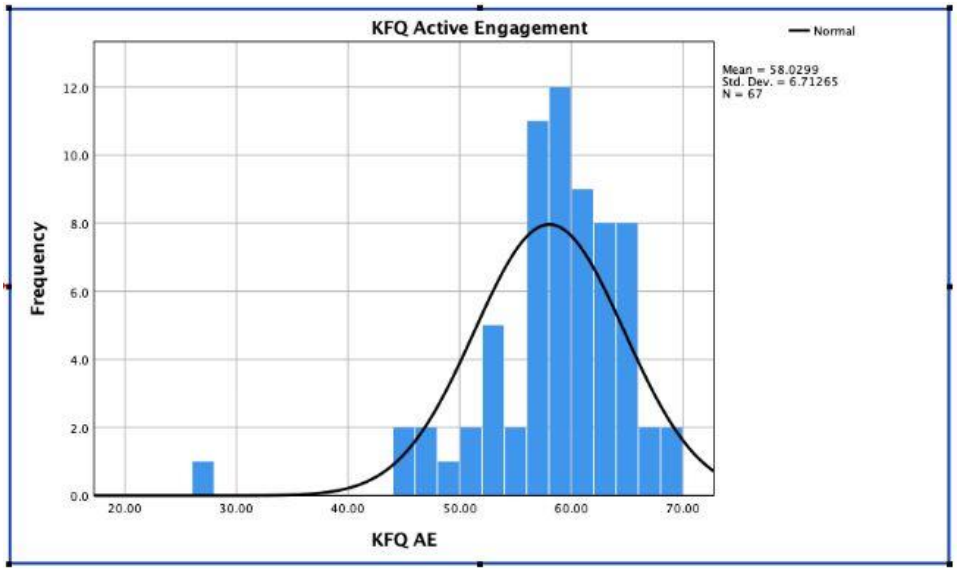


Figure 14

KFQ AE Score Distribution



KFQ Qualitized Results. Table 13 presents the specific followership style associated with the combination of factor scores, also presented in Chapter 3. Based on the quantitative data

results, the majority of participants (98.5%) in this study were qualitized as *exemplary* followers. According to Kelley (1992), exemplary followers are actively engaged and express independent, critical thinking skills.

Table 13

Followership Style

Independent Thinking	Active Engagement	Followership Style
High	High	Exemplary (Effective)
High	Low	Alienated
Low	High	Conformists (Yes People)
Middling	Middling	Pragmatists (Survivors)
Low	Low	Passive (Sheep)

Note. Taken from Kelley, 1992.

Sub RQ 1 Qualitative Results

What are the Followership Styles of Doctoral Students in a Formal Leadership Program?

In addition to Kelley's (1992) KFQ measure, interview participants were asked questions related to their followership style, how they would describe themselves as a follower, and to discuss their experiences in the follower role (see Appendix D). The researcher identified 32 initial codes from the interviews. These codes described behaviors such as buying in, leader support, going above and beyond, and relationship building. Two a priori codes were removed for lack of support (i.e., alienated and passive). A comprehensive list of the preliminary codes is shown in Table 14.

Table 14

Followership Style

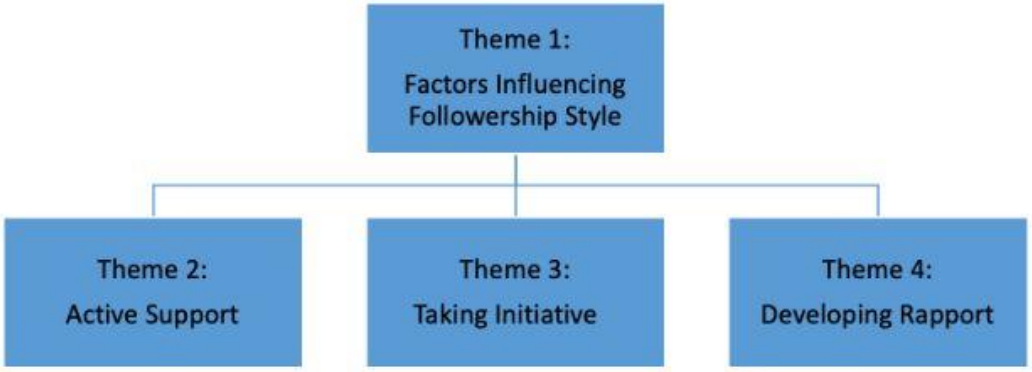
Preliminary Codes			
Exemplary	Conformist	Pragmatist	Team Support
Team Player	Innovative	Buy-In	Leader Support
Communicator	Critical Thinker	Choice to Follow	Organizational Support
Connection	Problem-Solving	Mirroring Expectations and Behaviors	Coachable
Respectful	Takes Initiative	Sense of Agency	Facilitator
Collaborator	Goes Above & Beyond	Modeling Behaviors	Embraces the Leader, Vision, Organization
Relationship Building	Proactive	Idea Generator	Adaptable
Engaged	Role Execution	Next Leader in Line	Helpful

Note. Open coding.

Subsequent axial coding allowed the researcher to winnow the codes and categorize them into the following themes: a) factors influencing followership style, b) active support, c) taking initiative, and d) developing rapport (see Figure 15). These themes gave insight into the followership styles of doctoral students in a formal leadership program. Each theme contains properties related to the research question, evidenced by the participants' comments.

Figure 15

Followership Style Emergent Themes



Sub RQ 1, Theme 1: Factors Influencing Followership Style

The first emergent theme in Sub RQ 1 was *factors influencing followership style*. For purposes of this study, this theme is defined by the factors that contributed to how the participants' enacted their followership style. Within this theme, respondents described themselves as a) having a sense of agency and b) mirroring expectations and behaviors. These codes are presented in detail throughout the next section and substantiated by the participants' remarks. A summary of the factors influencing followership style theme, including codes and phrases, is located at the end of this section.

Sense of Agency. A concept that emerged throughout the data analysis process was that respondents attested to their *agency to follow*. Furthermore, this decision to follow was a vital component of how the participants enacted their followership style, as Drew noted,

> For me, being someone that follows, I need to believe in the mission or the goals. I think that's a really significant piece because if I don't…if I don't buy into something, I'm going to have a really difficult time showing up every day or supporting the mission.

When Drew was asked if she thought she was better at leadership or followership, she favored leadership and offered the following explanation,

> I guess if I had to pick one, I would say leadership because I feel like I can adapt and embody leadership traits across multiple situations. With followership...being a follower, the challenge is...if I don't believe in it, if I don't see value in it, if I don't find it fulfilling, then it's a lot more challenging for me to feel connected there.

In this statement, the participant prefaces the need to believe in and value the vision to excel within their followership style. Jesse echoed this sentiment when asked what her role is when she is not the leader of the group,

> My end all is really if I don't agree with the way they're leading in terms of the direction we're going, then I need to leave because I'm not going to be good in my job because I'm not supporting the vision that they want to go.

This is not to suggest that the participants in this study were *only* choosing not to follow. They were revealing that they have a sense of agency on whether *to* follow. A decision that, in turn, impacted *how* they followed. For example, Korinne's choice to follow has shaped the way she enacts followership with her leader, as evidenced by the following comment,

> I try to be that with my boss...I don't have that hierarchal leadership, but I want her to know I'm here to support you, and I'm here to help you with what you need accomplished. I believe in our mission; I believe in our vision. So, how can I be the most helpful?

It appears that Korinne's decision to follow her leader, the mission, and the vision, influenced her followership style as someone who is actively engaged, supportive, and helpful. Drew expressed a similar thought when she revealed how believing in her leader can influence her followership

capacity, “when I find other leaders and individuals that are in positions of authority above me...when I believe in the work that they're doing, I feel more confident and competent and supported.”

This concept reappeared when the respondents described their experiences within followership as Jade noted, “Followers are...really important to any organization, and without followers, again, you can't get anything done. They can let the best plan fall apart if we're not working collaboratively with them.” Tripp reiterated this notion when describing his work with an ineffective leader,

> He failed to gather buy-in, [he assumed] what he saw his point ‘Z’ was everyone else's point ‘Z,’ and that they were all motivated to get there...and without the buy-in, folks did not want to take those marching orders.

Letting the best plan fall apart or not taking marching orders depicts a decision by followers to refrain from fully engaging in the followership process.

This sense of agency to follow emerged again throughout the interviews when the participants viewed followership from the leader's purview; as Tripp noted, “But on the leadership side of it, it's gaining that energy and meeting people where they are. Getting them excited in their way about the task so that they feel ownership and commitment to it.” Maggie offered a point of intrigue to this sentiment when she asserted,

> Until a leader can show competency to handle problems and find empathy by finding solutions, they will not have the keys to unlock motivation in anyone who follows their leadership style. The buy-in comes from the first two components; the third is how you get it done together.

In addition, Jesse reflected on the impact of the lack of followership when she commented,

> If you don't have strong followers, you are not going to make much impact at all. Because you are going to be constantly worked against...the goals that you're trying to meet are not the goals I'm trying to meet. If people are not on the same path as me, it doesn't go well---at all.

These statements combined allude to the follower as an organizational agent in their own right with the power to choose their level of engagement within their followership role. Furthermore, when the participants chose to follow, their followership style often mirrored the expectations they had of their followers.

Mirroring Expectations and Behaviors. The *mirroring of expectations and behaviors* concept emerged throughout the data analysis from the participants' experiences in the leader and follower role. Many participants suggested that their behaviors in the follower role reflected the followership schema they have developed in working with their followers. When the participants described their followership style, those with middle-management experience could articulate this concept with deeper clarity. For example, when asked to describe herself in a followership role, Jesse asserted,

> Because I have been a leader but also have to report to someone, I try to really be the employee that I want to have. So, I feel like I generally try to support whatever vision my supervisor wants us to adhere to, whether I agree with it or not. It's also how I work with my colleagues that report to the same person. We need to figure out how we can support [the vision] because this is the direction we're going, and if we're going to be successful, we have to really figure out what we can do to make that happen. Because, again, that is just how I want my [followers] to be.

When asked to describe the behaviors and characteristics of an effective follower, Jesse reiterated this idea,

> I would say...exactly what I talked about is what I tried to be for my supervisor...someone that just really believes in the direction you're trying to lead them to go. So really buys into what you're asking them to do. I can have my personal opinions on where I think things should go, but at the end of the day, they've gotten into that position for whatever reason. In the same way, I would want that from my [followers] because when they don't feel that way, the ship goes nowhere.

When Tripp was asked directly if his followership style was similar to what he expects from his team as a leader, he replied, “Yep, for me individually, yes.” Jesse concurred, “I know how to be a really good follower because I know what I want from my followers.” Korinne offered insight into this notion when asked if her experience as a leader has made her a better follower. She responded, “Yes because I have experienced ineffective followers on my team and effective followers. Effective followers make the job more fun and also easier to accomplish the mission.” When asked to elaborate on how having ineffective followers has influenced her followership style, Korinne commented,

> I think you learn what not to do, so to speak. And so that probably helps the education of followership. Just like having an ineffective leader, you're learning as a leader what doesn't work for you and what you want. And I think, same as a follower, that what doesn't work for you is going to really have the reverse effect of, I want to be a better follower than that person.

As Korinne indicated above, the *mirroring of expectations and behaviors* occurs from the leader’s scope as well. Maggie supported this idea when she commented, “I try my very best to

be a listener because it's something that I appreciate in leaders." Tripp agreed, "I think creating ownership and buy-in on all those levels, as I mentioned, is what leaders should do and what I often try to do."

Point of Intrigue. Tripp's comment is intriguing as it appears he alluded to the leader creating buy-in vs. the follower having the agency to buy in. This concept will be discussed in Chapter 5. In addition, a deeper analysis of the participants' perceptions and expectations of followers will be presented within the findings of Sub RQ 3 of this Chapter. Table 15 summarizes the information presented in the *Factors Influencing Followership Style* theme.

Table 15

Sub RQ 1, Theme 1: Factors Influencing Followership Style

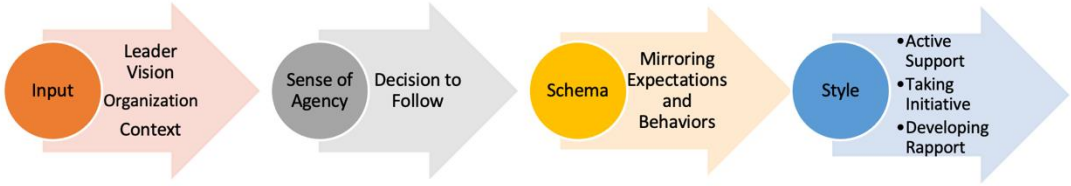
Theme	Code	Phrases
Factors Influencing Followership Style	Sense of Agency	• Being a follower, the challenge is if I don't believe in it, if I don't see value in it, if I don't find it fulfilling, then it's a lot more challenging for me to feel connected there. (Drew) • I knew that without their support, we couldn't get anything done. (Jade) • My end all is really if I don't agree with the way they're leading in terms of the direction we're going, then I need to leave. (Jesse)
	Mirroring Expectations and Behaviors	• I know how to be a really good follower because I know what I want from my followers. (Jesse) • I try to really be the employee that I want to have. (Jesse) • Having ineffective followers...I think you learn what not to do, so to speak. And so that probably helps the education of followership. (Korinne)

Analysis of the first theme led to the question; when the participants chose to follow and enact their followership schema, what was their followership style? Throughout the data analysis, respondents revealed central themes of *active support, taking initiative,* and *developing*

rapport (see Figure 17). Each theme is detailed throughout the next section and substantiated by the participants' remarks.

Figure 16

Followership Style



Note. Schematic processing.

Sub RQ 1, Theme 2: Active Support

The second emergent theme in Sub RQ 1 was *active support*. Many participants depicted active support as an integral component of their followership style. For purposes of this study, this theme is defined by the proactive behaviors of the participants toward stakeholders while in a follower role. Within this theme, respondents described themselves as actively committed to a) supporting the leader, b) the organization, and c) the team. These codes are presented in detail throughout the next section. A summary of the active support theme, including codes and phrases, is located at the end of this section.

Leader Support. Throughout the interviews, multiple respondents commented on their commitment to actively supporting the leader within their followership role. They endorsed feelings of ownership within the leadership process and serving as second in command; as Drew noted, "When I'm not the leader of the group, I try to be the VP...the next leader in line. Just trying to see how I can help the leader in their role and really support them." On the other hand,

Maggie views active leader support as contributing knowledge; she explained, “My role with the leader is to provide them with the most information I can from my area of expertise.”

Jade concurred with this point of view, “I believe that followers can contribute to leaders. They have good insights of what the program should look like, and they give quality feedback too.” The participants seem to understand that, in the follower role, they play a crucial part in the leadership process, and they have a responsibility to actively contribute.

Kevin described his active support for the leader in terms of checking in on the temperature of the room when he reflected on his relationship with his assistants,

> I think sometimes our role when we're not the individual running the [session] is to look at the other [leaders]. Maybe if they are getting a little over the top and be like, bring it down, bring it down a little bit.

Korinne furthered this notion by stating,

> If someone is very good with that initiative driving, then I'm just there to help in any way that I can...and to give suggestions. So, I still see that as being a leader but in just a slightly different way.

It seems the participants are not only supporting the leader but are fully engaged in that process; as Jesse proclaimed, “What I really try to do in all aspects is just support in the best way I know how. I feel like I generally try to support whatever vision my supervisor wants us to adhere to.” Jade demonstrated her engagement in creating a supportive environment for her leader as she commented,

> Right now, I'm in a followership position. I'm not the director anymore, so I try to work with the director as a follower, and if I ever think that I'm overstepping, I think through

> everything, then I will step back and say no, that's not in my task anymore, that's not in my job description. I need to allow her to thrive in the position.

While data from most participants revealed feelings of support for the leader and a sense of agency within the process, Jesse described feelings of *unwavering support* as she asserted,

> Because the person in the position of power has been put there for whatever reason, whether you agree with that or not, it is what it is. Even if you don't think they actually know what they're doing, they're still your supervisor. Whether I chose them to be in that position does not matter. I am working for them, and at the end of the day, it is their vision and direction that I need to follow.

While it is apparent that the participants recognized their support for the leader as a significant follower style, they also frequently mentioned their support for the organization.

Organizational Support. *Organizational support* was paramount throughout the data analysis. Korinne elaborated on how she enacts her support for her institution by commenting, “I try my best to understand what is needed for the organization and insert myself on where I feel like my strengths lie and how I can help.” It seems she enacts her organizational support by distributing the leadership. This behavior is tightly interwoven with leader support as it lessens the reliance on leaders to direct all the work. When probed about how she does this within her follower role, Korinne expounded, “I just try to be as helpful as possible. So probably a very similar role, but I'm not the one leading the agendas or the direction as a vision, just helping provide input for that.”

Kevin commented on the importance of organizational support from the leader's purview when he reflected on his experience with an effective follower,

> I think we need to hear [criticism] sometimes from [our followers] because sometimes I think individuals are scared to tell you that stuff. They're scared to come in and criticize us...We give them constructive criticism all the time. I think we ought to be able to take it in return.

In this statement, it appears that Kevin welcomes constructive feedback from his followers that may lack leader support but contribute to organizational support.

Point of Intrigue. An intriguing nuance was captured within this code as Tripp revealed the influence of context on his followership style,

> Sometimes I'm in larger meetings where it's cross-divisional within the organization. And so, there are moments in there when I will just speak to my topic, speak with, or be asked to speak to something, and I can play a passive participant.

This statement points to the participants' followership style being fluid or contextual based on the circumstances. Drew concurred with this perception when asked if she was better at leadership or followership; she asserted, "I think it depends on the situation."

Team Support. The final category, team support, was interwoven tightly throughout the Active Support theme. How participants supported and engaged with their team was significant to how they enacted their followership style. They described facilitating, modeling, and collaborating behaviors in the follower role; as Drew noted, "I feel like I am a messenger, a facilitator, and someone that is really striving to create balance." Maggie concurred, "I challenge others to find solutions to issues and work together when problems arise. This ultimately creates a team atmosphere around me and has the ability to strengthen interpersonal relationships within a group dynamic." Jesse elaborated on how her relationships with her team allow her to support them by proclaiming, "I continuously strive to demonstrate my care for those I work with and am

committed to supporting their growth...This allows me to easily identify my team members' potential and help them flourish in their strengths."

Interestingly, these characteristics were comparable to those within the leader role, evidenced by Drew's additional remarks,

> I feel like it's still similar to how it looks when I am a leader and just trying to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the group and see how we can strive to achieve cohesiveness and make sure that we're all on the same page and communicating.

Korinne made the same connection when she revealed,

> Sometimes within my leadership role, I have to take more of that initiative. So, when a leader is in the room, I still feel very helpful and very supportive, like, *what can I do to help the team*? But I'm not driving the bus, so to speak. With my colleagues, if I see someone struggling, then I'll step up my leadership role.

The participants appeared to move between the leader and follower roles with members of their team; as Maggie noted, "If a peer is knowledgeable and wants to show me how to do it better or easier or another way, I will listen."

Correspondingly, Tripp models his leadership behaviors to actively guide his peers while in the followership role, evidenced by his comment,

> I represent my actions or behaviors or my teams' work as an example to put on the table to motivate [colleagues] to mirror that. Or I'll do that in the form of questions to the supervisor. You know, *when would you like to have that done*? So, I might try to guide from within to still push those same things that I think are super valuable.

Jesse illustrated an interesting account of team support when she considered her role in a middle-management position, "we see leadership as this lone ranger of, *I'm calling the shots*. That's not

usually how it ever is. You have to figure out how to be a good follower to be a good leader." This highlights the symbiotic connection between the leader, follower, and members of the team.

Jade appeared to understand the importance of this connection when she noted, "We need to work with people. We need to listen more and meet people where they are and collaborate with people." Kevin asserted that support in the follower role must be intentional, sharing,

> I think sometimes it can become easy just to watch [the session] when I'm not the leader or the one running it. And forgetting to do those types of things. So, making sure you're going around and visiting with them. Not interrupting their [session] but helping them, especially technically. I've got to make sure that I get hands-on with them and that I help out. I try to talk to each [person]…and we've got 20 to 30 [people] in a room.

This illustrates how Kevin actively supports his organization when in the follower role. In addition, Korinne reflected on the positive impact team support had on her collegiate athletic experience,

> Thinking back to my college days and the year that we went to nationals, I actually credit that to our non-starting group. Everyone was in the same boat, rowing in the same direction. And our non-starters were just as engaged and trying to be not only competitive against our starters but also supportive in how they could help the [team]. I think everyone really bought into our mission, and without those eight people, I'm not sure if we would have been nearly as successful.

Table 16 summarizes the information presented for the *Active Support* theme with associated codes and phrases.

Table 16

Sub RQ 1, Theme 2: Active Support

Methodological Triangulation	Theme	Codes	Phrases
KFQ Category: Exemplary	Active Support	Leader Support	• When I'm not the leader of the group, I try to be the VP, the next leader in line. (Drew) • What I really try to do in all aspects is just support in the best way I know how. (Jesse) • Just trying to see how I can help the leader in their role and really support them. (Drew)
		Organizational Support	• If everyone agreed on a vision or a mission, I think you have to find a way to support it. (Korinne) • Without followers, we cannot make changes that are essential for the company. (Jade) • Everyone was engaged and trying to be not only competitive against our starters but also supportive of how they could help the organization. (Korinne)
		Team Support	• It's still similar to how it looks when I am a leader and just trying to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the group and see how we can strive to achieve cohesiveness. (Drew) • How can I help them improve? How can I help them accomplish their goals and our vision? So, it's all about us together as a team. (Korinne) • Sometimes, it can become easy just to watch when I'm not the one running it. So, making sure you're going around and helping them, especially technically. (Kevin)

Sub RQ 1, Theme 3: Taking Initiative

The third emergent theme in Sub RQ 1 was *taking initiative.* For purposes of this study, the taking initiative theme is defined by the proactive behaviors of the participants to a) problem solve, b) go above and beyond, and c) execute their role. These codes are presented in detail throughout the next section and evidenced by the participants' remarks. A summary of the taking initiative theme, including codes and phrases, is located at the end of this section.

Problem-Solving. Not only did the participants choose whether to follow, but they also ascribed a sense of agency to act. They expressed taking the initiative to understand the leader's vision and champion that direction for themselves and the team. They described their willingness to problem-solve and their competence to innovate. For example, when asked about the development of her followership style, Korinne noted, "As I grew, it was taking more initiative and coming up with my own ideas. You're not just being told what to do." In addition, Jesse described herself in the follower role as "a competent, critical thinker. I never describe myself as creative, but I want to say innovative because I'd like to think I take where we're trying to go and make my own innovation of it."

In addition, many participants provided examples of taking the initiative to solve a problem while in the follower role, as Maggie asserted,

> As I've aged in higher education, I feel like I have more skin in the game and that my level of leadership is also important...sometimes even in the process of [the leader] making their big money decisions has to do with me in my level of leadership.

Korinne shared, "With my colleagues, if I see someone struggling, I'll step up my leadership role. Tripp added, "If I see that a room isn't taking that action, if I feel like I have a voice in that room, I will ask questions to hold and create that clarity."

Going Above and Beyond. In addition to problem-solving, the majority of participants noted going above and beyond within their follower role, as Drew commented,

> The way I see it is it's going above and beyond. You're not just meeting the bare minimum because, again, you're working on meeting expectations across all different levels. Which typically requires more effort, engagement, and work to do it effectively.

Kevin shared a specific example of going above and beyond when he was not leading the group, "I've got to make sure that I get hands-on with them, and I help out. Sometimes I end up [joining in] when my assistant is in charge... In our [work]...you might have an odd number one day, so I might have to hop in with one of the smaller guys." While going above and beyond can positively affect the organization, it can work against it, as illustrated in Tripp's remarks,

> I don't have a lot of energy and belief in the above and beyond. We have job descriptions. They're robust and accurate. And we should be great at what's in our job description. And if we are, we are an effective follower...I think of a specific individual who maybe felt that above and beyond, or more than what was told, was necessary to gain accolades and success. And so, this person was often taking on extra work, and my frustration was...but you're not accomplishing the tasks right in front of you...you're failing the things in your job description and then giving the excuse, but I was doing XYZ...XYZ doesn't matter without ABC, so let's do ABC.

Notwithstanding, the participants' vocalized engaging in a followership style of going above and beyond *within* the scope of their role and vision of the organization.

Role Execution. The concept of role execution emerged from the data to contribute to the taking initiative theme. Participants discussed behaviors such as knowing and executing their

role, being willing to do the work, and being proactive in the process. Tripp elaborated on this idea, evidenced by,

> I think followership should still be proactive. I think if we talk about proactive and reactive, sometimes followership can be seen as reactive. The phone rings, and I answer. I'm just following orders...but a proactive follower still needs to know the work in front of them and be proactive in achieving their tasks or assignments. Or at the broadest level, knowing and understanding their job description and taking action on the next thing.

It appears Tripp emphasizes follower behavior that takes the initiative to execute responsibilities. Jade reflected on taking the initiative to execute her role by sharing,

> I want to find out where people are and what they would like from me...I'd like to know, what are your strengths? What do you want? What can I help you with? I wanted to know what you need. And if I have that expert knowledge, I may be able to help you.

Drew expressed a similar sentiment when she reflected on taking the initiative to understand her role within different contexts,

> Well, it depends on the group and the context of it. It's very situational…I think I am someone that would prefer to have the opportunity to observe and assess the dynamics of a group before automatically self-ascribing what role I would fit into the best because, again, I would say so much of it---of group functionality depends on everyone's strengths, and that's going to vary…Where are the gaps, and within those gaps, do I have any strengths that I could fill in those pieces?

In addition, participants noted that it takes work to execute their follower role. When asked if everyone is an effective follower, Kevin commented, "I think they all know what it takes to be a good follower. But I don't know if they're all willing to do it...I don't know if they're willing to do

the right things to be a good follower." When probed about why he thought some followers weren't willing to do the work, he stated, "Because it's hard, and they are not willing to sacrifice certain things."

They also revealed that executing the follower role takes finesse, as Maggie described an experience she had during a team project, "we asked thought-provoking questions, requested clarification from the individual instead of inserting our own opinions on topics, and provided feedback that was necessary and motivating for further inquiry." It appears she understood her role in this situation was to contribute her expertise and help shape the vision.

Based on the data, it seems the participants take the initiative to do the work to be effective followers; as Jade expressed, "if I am recognized as a strong follower, I'm fine because wherever I am, I want to do my best...Wherever or whatever position I am in, I want to put 100 plus percent there." Jesse concurred by tying the concept of role execution and the concept of going above and beyond, as evidenced by the following remarks,

> I think if you just do what you're told, it doesn't actually make anything better. If you want to be good at what you do and really support your supervisor, you're going to go above and beyond what they're asking you to do. Because you are a critical-thinking human who wants to...take what they're telling you to do and bring it to the next level.

Table 17 summarizes the information presented for the Taking Initiative theme.

Table 17

Sub RQ 1, Theme 3: Taking Initiative

Methodological Triangulation	Theme	Codes	Phrases
KFQ Category: Exemplary	Taking Initiative	Problem-Solving	• I want to say maybe innovative because I'd like to think I take where we're trying to go and make my own innovation of it. (Jesse) • I'm a very creative thinker. So, I offer ideas that probably not a lot of people think of, and I'm not scared to say them. (Korinne) • The process of that person making their big decisions also has to do with me in my level of leadership. (Maggie)
		Going Above & Beyond	• It is going above and beyond. You're not just meeting the bare minimum because, again, you're working on meeting expectations across all different levels. (Drew) • I've got to make sure that I get hands-on with them, and I help out. (Kevin) • If you want to be good at what you do and really support your supervisor, you're going to go above and beyond what they're asking you to do. (Jesse)
		Role Execution	• Being proactive in achieving tasks or assignments or at the broadest level, knowing and understanding the job description, and taking action on the next thing. (Tripp) • Take what they're telling you to do and bring it to the next level. (Jesse) • It all depends on where I am. Wherever or whatever position I am in, I want to put my 100 plus percent there. (Jade)

Sub RQ 1, Theme 4: Developing Rapport

The fourth and final emergent theme in Sub RQ 1 was *developing rapport*. For purposes of this study, the developing rapport theme is defined by the participants' behaviors to build positive relationships with their leaders and members of the organization. Within this theme, respondents described themselves as developing rapport through a) connection and b) collaboration. These codes are presented in detail throughout the next section and evidenced by the participants' remarks. A summary of the developing rapport theme, including codes and phrases, is located at the end of this section.

Connection. The active participation in establishing connection was evident throughout the interviews. The participants valued compassion, understanding, and developing positive relationships with the leader and the team. Maggie proclaimed, "I sense others' feelings, create safe spaces, listen well, and gain others' trust." She reflected on why establishing a connection with her leader was important to her by sharing,

> When I meet with my [leader] for our [yearly evaluation] meetings, and she asks me a bunch of questions about my professional development, I like to turn the table and ask questions about her and get to know her a little bit more. And why she wants to be in that leadership role and what parts of it she likes. Because it just helps me to develop that relationship and be a better follower for her.

When asked to elaborate on who should be responsible for developing that relationship, Maggie commented,

> I think both people are responsible for it. You know, one might say that it's on the leader to reach out first and to be the one that develops that relationship, but my style of followership, as that self-led follower, I want to make a connection with the leader. It's

> also up to me to reach out and familiarize myself with that individual and ask them questions.

Jesse concurred, describing connection as an area of strength, asserting, “I can easily make genuine connections with my team members on an emotional level by engaging with them and listening to them.”

Drew echoed the importance of connection when asked how her views have changed as she has gained leadership experience. She noted how she now views leadership as a relational process between leaders and followers, evidenced by,

> [Someone who is] compassionate, understanding, really being able to connect with individuals on a personal level to just understand who they are, what their strengths are, what their weaknesses are, or their areas of growth are.

Jesse explained how connecting with her leader can impact her followership capacity, “When you have a good supervisor who you know cares, you care just as much...They would do a lot of good work for you, and you want to do good work for them.”

This was a compelling revelation in that Jesse conveyed that a stronger connection with her leader would positively affect her level of work. Maggie appears to understand this sentiment, commenting, “People want praise; they want to be seen to have value and that their thoughts and solutions matter.” She went on to describe how she establishes a connection with others by sharing,

> I'm oftentimes the charmer in the group. I like to keep things light, but I like to contribute where I can. I'm always interested in other people's viewpoints and what they have to say, and it's always really interesting to me to hear my peers, their intellect, their experience,

> their knowledge...Understanding cannot happen without empathy, feeling, and self-awareness.

Tripp described his strengths as well in terms of connecting with others,

> I'm a *Woo* if you think about strengths if you're using a strengths finder mindset, and I'm an *ideator*, I'm a *futurist*, and I'm a bit of a clown sometimes too. So, I like to make things fun. I joke with people. I gain their engagement and maybe, hopefully, respect as an individual outside and before the task.

Collaboration. Tied closely to the success of participants' developing rapport was collaboration. The ability to cooperate, communicate effectively, and practice active listening was frequently mentioned throughout the interviews. Maggie emphasized that working with others is one of her strengths, evidenced by the statement, “I build trust by helping others understand and communicate their needs, show compassion...provide stability by gauging the emotion in a room with patience and understanding.” Jade described an experience where she had stepped down from a leadership role and how collaboration with the new leader was paramount to their relationship,

> I need to collaborate and work with the leader...If I want to volunteer, I ask her... I know how to do stuff because I did that thing for almost four years. So, I ask and say, would you like me to help you with this? I don't want to jump in and do the stuff for her and [be] disrespectful to her.

The value the participants' placed on developing rapport through positive communication also surfaced when observing others, as Korinne expressed,

> She [her leader] listens to understand. I think that she develops positive relationships with the people around her. She's a good communicator with her [colleagues and supervisor]. I

> think she's a good communicator with those people and then establishes those positive relationships. Because I think she recognizes how important those are.

The importance of listening to understand, as Korinne stated, surfaced in Jade's remarks as well, “I tried to listen, and I have...and again, because I am a dominant person, I have to talk to myself all the time to really listen and to cooperate and to work with others.” Maggie commented on her active listening skills, noting, “I want people to know how much I admire their efforts and hard work, that it makes a difference and is important.”

It became clear that collaboration was a critical component of developing rapport among the participants. Maggie responded to this idea by citing an example of a committee she had served on, suggesting a connection between respectful communication and group rapport,

> It makes it an enjoyable process. We're essentially giving grant money to people, and everybody comes in with their differences and opinions of what is worthy and what isn't and their levels of expertise. But I think it's a really respectful environment. And because of that, because everybody steps into that role, it just creates a vibe that is comfortable and professional...We all do what we're supposed to do and then have the discussion and make our decisions. It's a good group to be a part of.

Table 18 summarizes the information presented for the Developing Rapport theme.

Table 18

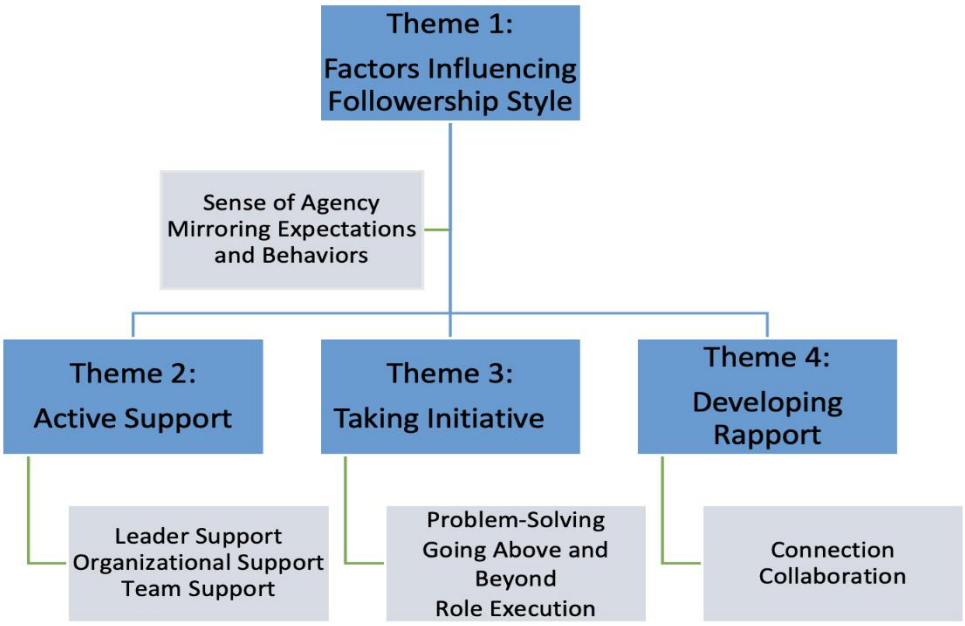
Sub RQ 1, Theme 4: Developing Rapport

Methodological Triangulation	Theme	Code	Phrases
KFQ Category: Exemplary	Developing Rapport	Connection	• I'm really someone that wants feedback, so honest feedback, in a caring way and through a lens of improvement, is really important. (Jesse) • I think bringing the group together; I think that's a big part of having a successful program. (Kevin) • My style of followership is I want to make a connection with that leader. (Maggie)
		Collaboration	• I tried to listen, cooperate, and work with others. (Jade) • Conversation is open, and everybody's opinions are welcomed. (Maggie) • I'm kind of that middle person; I'm a follower still. I'm relaying information and communicating both ways. (Korinne)

In summation, four themes emerged to explore the followership style of doctoral students in a formal leadership program. Figure 17 presents a concept map of the themes and associated codes that emerged throughout the data analysis.

Figure 17

Followership Style Concept Map



Note. Followership style themes and associated codes.

Sub RQ 2

What are the Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Among Doctoral Students in a Formal Leadership Program?

Quantitative Results. To explore doctoral students' leadership attitudes and beliefs, the researcher examined data from Section III of the Qualtrics (released in August 2022) survey, which contained Wielkiewicz's (2000) LABS-III measure. This measure consisted of a five-point, 28-item Likert scale, which assessed responses on two orthogonal dimensions: hierarchical thinking (HT) and systemic thinking (ST). Fourteen items were associated with each dimension. Scores were based on participant responses of strongly agree (1) to strongly disagree (5).

A composite score was calculated for each of the two LABS-III dimensions (i.e., HT and ST). The highest possible score for each dimension was 70; the lowest possible score was 14.

The minimum score reported was 28 for HT and 14 for ST, with a maximum reported score of 61 for HT and 34 for ST. The mean score for all participants for HT was 43.45 (*M* =43.45, *SD* = 6.52), and ST was 23.03 (*M* = 23.03, *SD* = 4.37). The distribution of results for HT and ST can be seen in Figures 18 and 19, respectively.

Figure 18

LABS-III HT Score Distribution

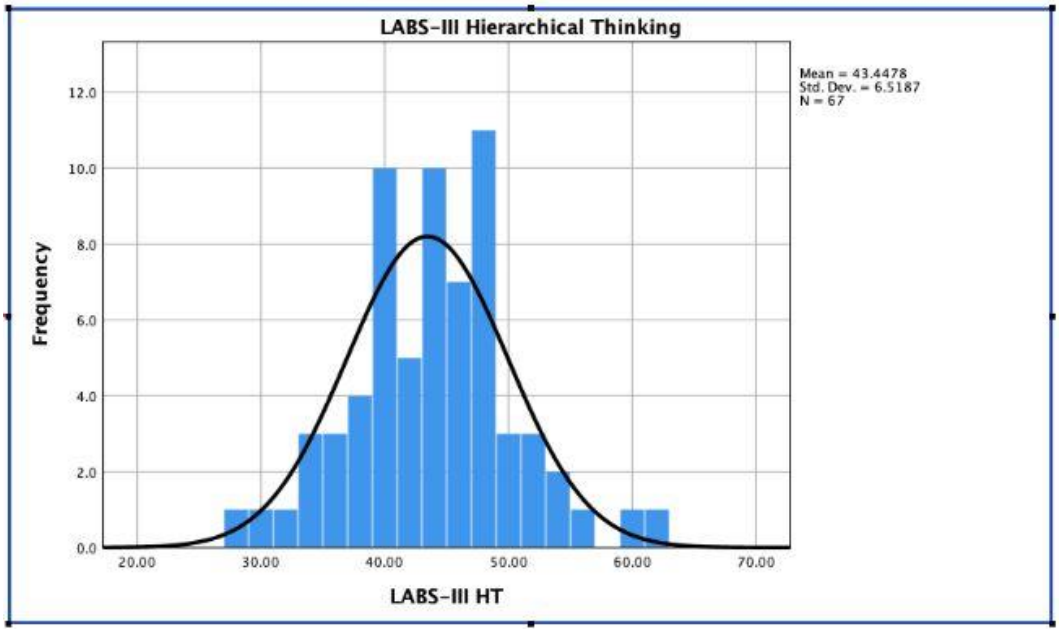
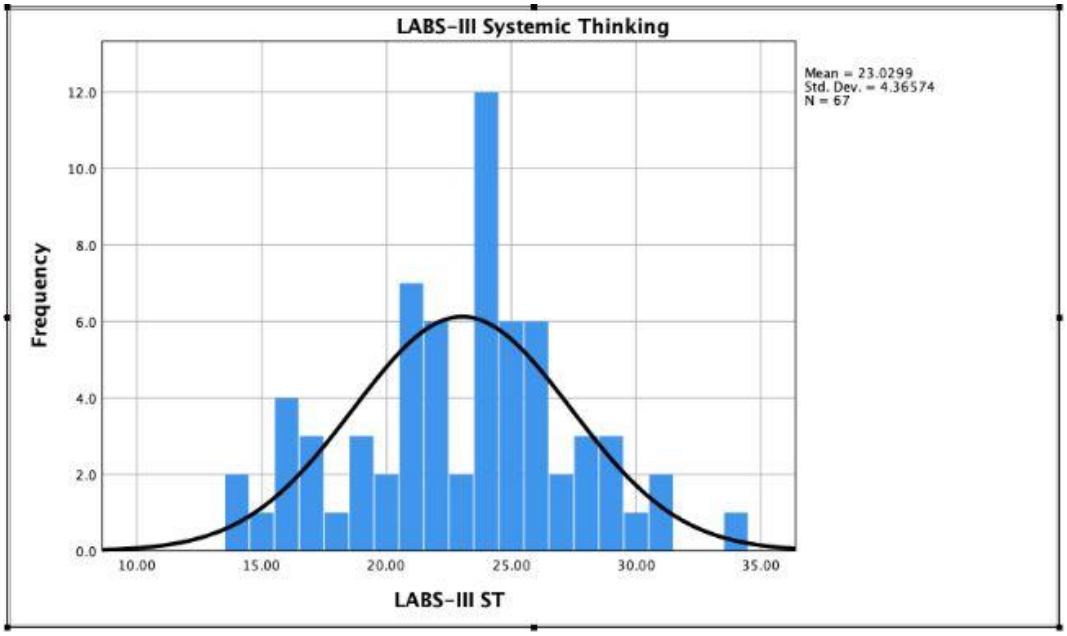


Figure 19

LABS-III ST Score Distribution



LABS-III Qualitized Results. Students with a stronger belief in a hierarchical leadership model scored *lower* on the HT dimension. According to Wielkiewicz (2000), this "suggests organizations should be organized in a stable hierarchical manner with power and control focused in the upper levels of the hierarchy" (p. 341). This is most closely related to an industrial paradigm of leadership.

Students with a stronger belief in a systemic leadership system scored *lower* on the ST dimension. A "systemic approach breaks down hierarchical structures and invites organization members to participate in the leadership processes" (Wielkiewicz & Meuwissen, 2014, p. 221). This is most closely related to a post-industrial paradigm of leadership.

Based on the quantitative data results, the majority of participants in this study were qualitized as having systemic thinking. According to Wielkiewicz (2000), this means that, in general, the participants believe "positional leaders must facilitate, rather than constrain, the flow

of information within organizations, and broaden, rather than restrict, participation in decision-making processes" (p. 336).

Qualitative Results. In addition to Wielkiewicz's (2000) LABS-III measure, participants were asked questions about their leadership experiences (see Appendix D). For example, "At the beginning of your career, what did you think leadership was and what do you think it is now?" and "Think about someone in your experience that has been an effective leader; what characteristics did this person have?" These questions were asked to gain insight into their leadership attitudes and beliefs. The researcher generated 19 codes from the interviews, including two a priori categories: a) systemic thinking and b) hierarchical thinking (Wielkiewicz, 2000). A comprehensive list of the preliminary codes is shown in Table 19.

Table 19

Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs

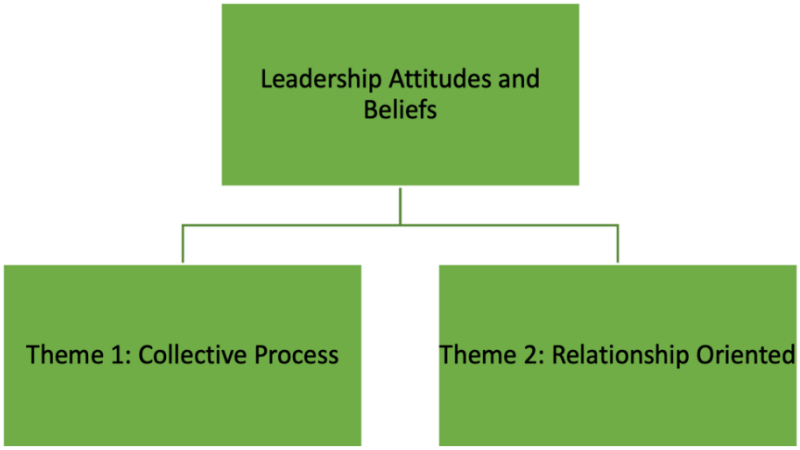
Preliminary Codes			
Influence	Relationship	Collective Process	Traits
Power Imbalance	Affective	Co-Created	Systemic (a priori)
Reciprocal Influence	Connection	Shared	Hierarchical (a priori)
Leader Dependent	Interchangeable	Transferred	Interpersonal
Role vs. Personality	Multidirectional	Contextual	

Note. Open Coding.

Subsequent axial coding allowed the researcher to winnow the codes and categorize them into the following themes: a) collective process and b) relationship oriented (see Figure 20). These themes gave insight into the leadership attitudes and beliefs of doctoral students in a formal leadership program. Each theme contains properties related to the research question and is evidenced by the participants' drawings and comments.

Figure 20

Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Emergent Themes



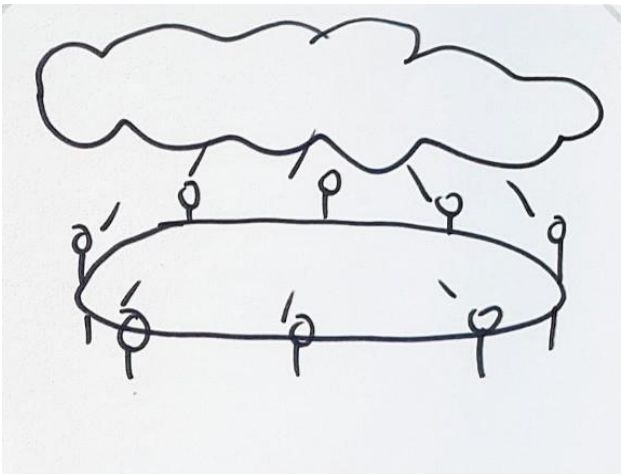
Sub RQ 2, Theme 1: Collective Process

The first emergent theme in Sub RQ 2 was *collective process*. For purposes of this study, this theme is defined by the participants' beliefs that leadership is a process, not a person or position. Within this theme, respondents revealed that leadership should be a) co-created, b) shared, and c) transferred between leaders and followers. These codes are detailed in the following sections and substantiated by the participants' remarks. A summary of the collective process theme, including codes and phrases, is located at the end of this section.

Leadership is Co-Created. Throughout the data analysis, there was broad support that leadership does not fall solely on the leader; it is co-created between the leader(s) and follower(s). Maggie captured this idea, asserting, "Leadership is misunderstood, and we classify it for reasons of power. When really, it is a collective process." She reinforced this concept when asked to draw effective leadership (see Figure 21). Maggie explained, "This is a round table with people sitting…Everybody is in everybody's view, and there is a *think bubble* coming from everybody's minds to a cloud of thought above."

Figure 21

Effective Followership



Maggie followed up by reflecting on why this type of leadership is effective for her,

> If this is going to be a top-down, I'm not going to excel very much. Is it going to be a distributed leadership where, like my drawing, we all have a voice, and we come to conclusions together? Then I'm going to offer my voice more. And I'm going to feel more comfortable, autonomous, and safe.

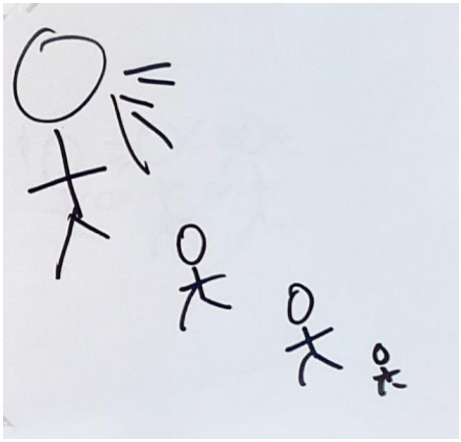
The participants shared experiences of what could happen when leadership is not co-created. For example, Tripp described an ineffective leader he had worked with, "[they] did not make a clear road map of point A to point B…Which often left people, when [they] left the room, frustrated...and maybe not knowing their part." It appears that the individual was not providing clarity to co-produce leadership with their team making it difficult for the group to contribute to the leadership process.

Korinne depicted this concept when asked to draw ineffective leadership (see Figure 22). She explained,

> I put the ineffective leader as the largest person in the room…then the other people in more of a hierarchical standing…So, when you have that hierarchical system, if you're at the bottom, you're not important to an ineffective leader, which I would argue are some of the most important people in an organization.

Figure 22

Ineffective Leadership



Maggie asserted that in this situation, leadership does not exist, "if people are going to tell me what to do, they're managing me, they're not leading me."

Leadership is Shared. The concept that leadership is co-created points to it being less of a function of position and more of a joining of ideas, ideas that are shared between leaders and followers. Maggie affirmed this concept by commenting, "A base of supporters becomes invaluable. More specifically, building a support system of individuals with different personality types and strengths will ensure a variety of opinions, input, values, and perspectives."

The participants weighed in on their experiences with shared leadership as Jesse commented, "Our leader is someone that is really trying to get us all on the same page, not really

telling us exactly what we need to do and how to do it. They're trying to get us all going in the same direction so that we can all work together better." Maggie reflected on her experience with shared leadership while chairing a committee,

> I want everybody to be able to feel like they have a voice, a seat at the table. If it's a situation where we can come to a conclusion together, and then I communicate that decision to my [leader] from there...then that's my preference…My preference is always to build the decision together because I have asked those stakeholders to be a part of the process, and I want their voices to be a part of it.

Korinne cautioned that *not* sharing leadership can lead to high employee turnover,

> I think a hierarchical structure is more effective in the beginning…but long term, it will fail. I think good people will leave those structures because there's a lot of red tape to get through. So, in a more systemic version, I think you're still going to find success, and it's going to be a long-standing, positive, growing culture.

There was unanimous agreement that these views of shared leadership have developed for the participants over time; as Kevin proclaimed,

> When I first started…I thought being a leader was more about being in charge, which it isn't necessarily. Of course, you're in charge of the program, but I think being a leader is teaching others how to be leaders too.

Jade agreed, recounting how her feelings toward shared leadership have evolved,

> Coming out of college…you didn't think of working together. You thought that okay…so I should be the one researching and presenting. But throughout my education, I realized that is not a transformational leader; that is authoritarian. We need to work with people. So, I've transformed throughout the years.

Leadership is Transferred. Closely related to the idea that leadership is shared was leadership is transferred. The participants appeared to believe that followers can become leaders and leaders can become followers at any point within the leadership relationship. Furthermore, they strive to create these opportunities for their followers while in the leader role. Kevin succinctly captured this idea stating, “It's not all about being the one that's in charge and always having them hear your voice. But teaching your [followers] and teaching your assistants how to be leaders, and then learning from them.” Korinne expounded on this concept, “a good follower can take on initiatives and push them forward, and to do that, a good follower needs to have people around them helping and supporting.”

It seems the participants understand the need to distribute leadership and take on a support role from time to time. As Jade declared, “I know that followers are important, and I cannot be leading all the time.” Just as the participants’ views on shared leadership have evolved, so has the belief that leadership should be transferred, as Jesse illustrated,

> I think in my head, you were the leader, and you told people what to do, and they listened. And that was leadership. You were the head of the team, and you led what needed to be done, and people just fell in line. What I think now, having been in a leadership position, it’s someone that is trying to develop us as supervisees to be better leaders ourselves.

In summation, there was a strong consensus there must be collaboration between leaders and followers to produce, share, and transfer leadership. This collaboration supports the participants’ view that leadership is a collective process. Korinne illustrated an interesting portrayal (see Figure 23) of the collective process theme when asked to draw effective leadership. She explained,

> I have a couple of people holding hands…I have the ears open and listening and communicating with each other on both sides of that leadership circle. So, I think that communication is good, and they're providing input to the people around them.

Figure 23

Leadership Process

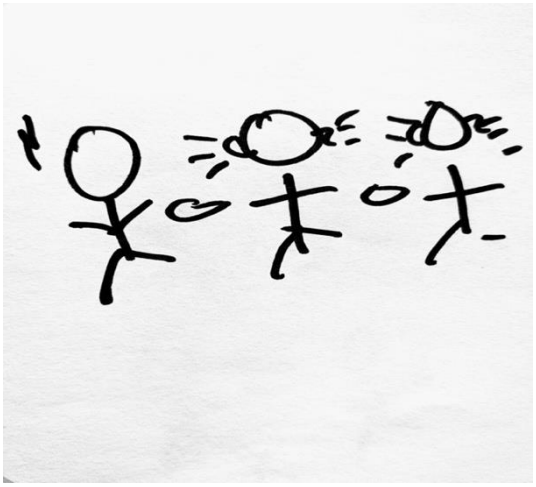


Table 20 summarizes the information presented in the *Collective Process* theme.

Table 20

Sub RQ 2, Theme 1: Collective Process

Methodological Triangulation	Theme	Codes	Phrases
LABS III Category: Systemic Thinking	Collective Process	Leadership is Co-Created	• We only talk about leadership in terms of being the one that's leading, which I think is why so many people struggle with it. (Jesse) • Leadership is misunderstood. And we classify it for power...When really it is a collective process. (Maggie)
		Leadership is Shared	• My preference is always to build the decision together because I have asked those stakeholders to be a part of the process, and I want their voices to be a part of it. (Maggie) • I think being a leader is teaching others how to be leaders too. (Kevin) • In a more systemic version, I think you're still going to find success, but it's going to be a long-standing, positive, growing culture. (Korinne)
		Leadership is Transferred	• It's not all about being the one that's in charge and always having them hear your voice. But teaching your [followers] and teaching your assistants how to be leaders and then learning from them. (Kevin) • A good follower can take on initiatives and push them forward, and to do that, a good follower needs to have people around them helping and supporting. (Korinne) • My goal is that one day they have the tools to be a leader; they've been given the opportunity that could make them a leader later on in life (Kevin)

Sub RQ 2, Theme 2: Relationship Oriented

The second emergent theme in Sub RQ 2 was *relationship oriented*. For purposes of this study, this theme is defined by the participants' attitudes that leadership is a) interpersonal, b) multidirectional, and c) influence based. The following sections detail these categories and are supported by the participants' drawings and remarks. A summary of the relationship oriented theme, including codes and phrases, is located at the end of this section.

Interpersonal Relationships. As the research progressed, it became clear that interpersonal relationships were paramount to the relationship oriented theme. Participants conveyed beliefs that leadership should be comprised of motivational connection and interpersonal competencies. For example, when asked about effective leadership, Jesse proclaimed,

> I think there's this myth that we can't be human and still be good leaders. So, what I've really appreciated in a lot of my leaders is seeing humanity in them, which means when they have made a mistake, they are able to be vulnerable.

Drew concurred, noting, "The characteristics that I feel like I connect with the most for the leadership role are compassion, understanding, and flexibility." Maggie conveyed this concept, noting, "Before a leader can comprehend an individual's problem, they must be able to hear what someone is saying and process it in a way that offers solutions and solidarity."

This statement suggests that cognitive understanding is a critical element within a leadership relationship. Several participants expressed this as they described how they interact within the leadership process, evidenced by,

- "I like to think that I make conscious efforts to put myself in others' shoes" (Drew).
- "I was able to show them that I understand and validate their challenges, and I want to help them overcome those challenges and move towards their goal" (Tripp).
- "It's that challenge and support and really finding what helps them feel like a good employee. So, what kind of acknowledgment do they like so that they appreciate their job" (Jesse).
- "I want my colleagues to feel safe coming to me as a sounding board" (Maggie).

The participants appear to place value on developing interpersonal leadership relationships that invoke cognitive and affective understanding. An intriguing thought emerged within this category that there is a delicate balance between leadership relationships and affective understanding; as Kevin attested, "You want to try and make everybody happy. You can't…and that's something that's hard for me. I want to make everybody happy, and that necessarily isn't a good leader."

Multidirectional Relationships. Within the relationship oriented theme, *multidirectional relationships* emerged as a category. There was an overall sense among the participants that a leadership relationship can be vertical (e.g., leader and follower), horizontal (e.g., follower and follower), or even circular (e.g., multiple leaders and followers). The participants view leaders and followers as a role, not necessarily a position. Therefore, they believe leader and follower roles are interchangeable within and across relationships. Korinne supported this idea by positing, "I think you can be both a leader and a follower. So, [you] can switch in and out of that role based on what [you are] doing." Tripp reinforced this notion by asserting, "I think there's space for followership and leadership even in a single individual. So maybe an understanding of that, more than just being put into one category."

Korinne cited an example of how she switches in and out of the leader and follower role throughout the day, “I’m a director, but I'm not the ultimate leader. I'm kind of that middle person. I’m a follower still. I'm relaying information and communicating both ways.” This switching of roles can happen in an instant; as Kevin described, “There are times where I don't feel the [session] is going well, and when I'm not running it, I step in. I don't like to do that. I try not to do that. Because I hate it when someone does it to me, but it does happen sometimes.”

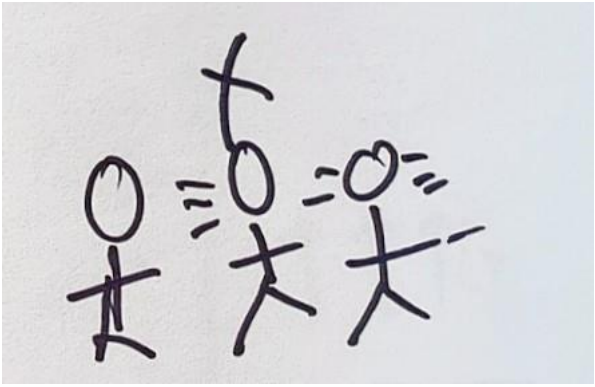
In addition, it was evident the participants have experienced multi-level or circular leadership relationships in group settings, as Maggie conveyed, “I felt as a group that we all blended our different strengths…We listened and gave praise for competencies and jobs well done. We asked thought-provoking questions, requested clarification, and provided feedback.”

Korinne illustrated an example of how a breakdown in communication can impact a multidirectional leadership relationship (see Figure 24); she explained,

> I set it up with an effective leader, and I had an ineffective follower to the right of that leader. That person was only communicating with the leader and only listening to the leader. And I think that can be ineffective because [leadership] involves both other people in the organization and the leader, not just one or the other.

Figure 24

Ineffective Leadership



It appears the participants not only accept this multidirectional leadership relationship, they seem to embrace it, evidenced by Maggie's comment, "I am interested in how I can grow as an individual who resides in both follower and leader roles" Jade shared this sentiment noting, "I love being a leader, but I'm okay being a follower too." Tripp summed up this idea by stating, "I don't think we need to be pinged into *I am a leader or a follower*. I think there are skill sets that we probably should...in most scenarios, that we all need to implement at the right time."

Influence Based. This led to the question, what factors determine who takes on the leader or follower role within the leadership process? The participants expressed attitudes that leadership is based on an influence relationship between the leader(s) and follower(s). As this influence shifts, so does the leadership relationship. Similar to the multidirectional relationship category, the participants revealed influence flows in all directions and sometimes simultaneously. Drew supported this idea by stating, "I am a teacher, and I am a student. I strive to instill a message to my students that I am their teacher just as much as they are mine." Kevin concurred, "I can learn from my assistants; I can learn from my [followers]. I think we've all got to continue to evolve and get better [together]."

Jade provided insight as to why followers have influence, commenting, "They have good insights of what the program should look like; they give quality feedback too because they're experienced." Jade's comment alludes to followers having unique expertise to persuade or influence leaders within the leadership relationship. The participants also conveyed they expect to influence others while in the follower role, as Maggie noted,

> If I am part of the team, there's a reason why they want my opinions or a reason why they picked me to be a part of the group…I want to contribute, so I find a way to do that out front or behind the scenes.

Point of Intrigue. The unique expertise or resources of one individual over another seems to impact which way the influence flows. Although this influence can be reciprocal, the participants revealed it typically flows from leaders to followers. For example, Kevin asserted,

> I believe it starts from the top, and it's my role as the [leader] to lead by example. I think that's a big thing. And I think the leader needs to teach others how to lead. But also giving your [colleagues] or your [followers] the power to lead.

When asked what Tripp's role is as a leader, he asserted, "I think my role often is to create the boundary lines of the meeting, and nurture out action points, and create accountability." Tripp elaborated, commenting, "I find my role to be in a leadership conversation where I'm going to make sure that *we* turns into *who, how, what, when* and *why*, so kind of articulating those steps." When asked the same question, Kevin revealed a similar sentiment noting,

> I think my role is to hold them to a high standard. I think that's always a [leader's] role. To hold them to a high standard and to remind them why they're there. What goals did they set at the beginning of the year?

These statements seem to indicate that although the leadership relationship is multidirectional, influence typically flows from leaders to followers. Table 21 summarizes the information presented in the relationship oriented theme.

Table 21

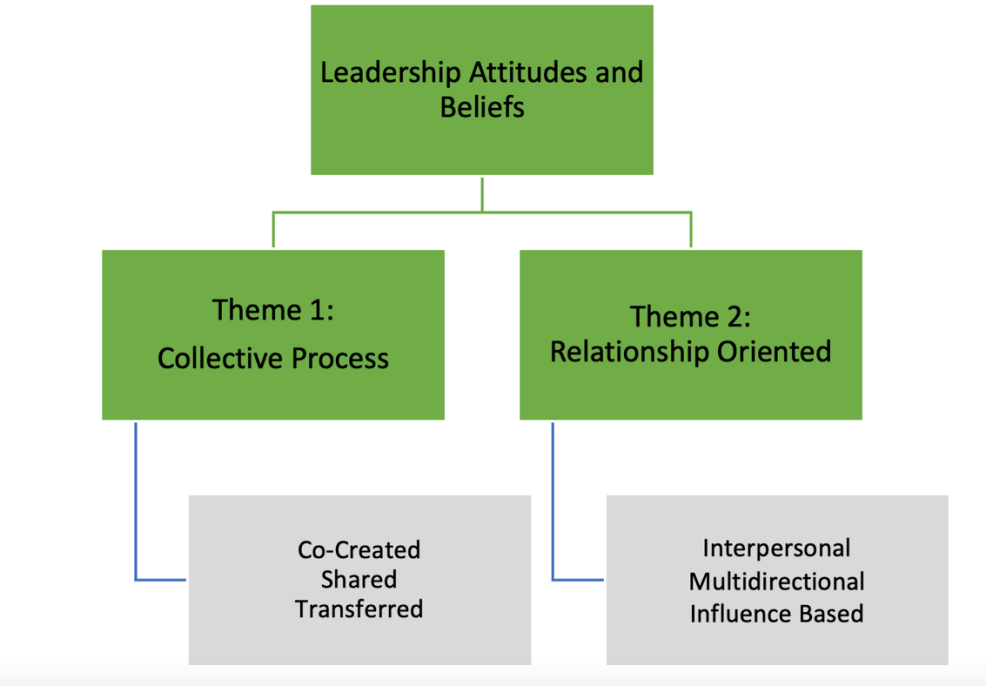
Sub RQ 2, Theme 2: Relationship Oriented

Methodological Triangulation	Themes	Codes	Phrases
LABS III Category: Systemic Thinking	Relationship Oriented	Interpersonal	• I think there's this myth that we can't be human and still be good leaders. (Jesse) • I make a conscious effort to put myself in others' shoes. (Drew) • I was able to show them that I understand and validate their challenges. (Tripp)
		Multidirectional	• I think you can be a leader and a follower based on what you are doing. (Korinne) • I don't think we need to be pinged into I am a leader or a follower. (Tripp) • I'm a director, but I'm not the ultimate leader. I'm kind of that middle person; I'm a follower still. I'm relaying information and communicating both ways. (Korinne)
		Influence Based	• I strive to instill a message to my students that I am their teacher just as much as they are mine. (Drew) • I want to contribute, so I find a way to do that out front or behind the scenes. (Maggie) • I think the leader needs to teach others how to lead. (Kevin)

In summation, two themes emerged to explore the leadership attitudes and beliefs of doctoral students in a formal leadership program. Figure 25 presents a concept map of the themes and associated codes presented within this section.

Figure 25

Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Concept Map



Note. Leadership attitudes and beliefs, themes, and associated codes.

Sub RQ 3

What is the Perception of Followership Among Doctoral Students in a Formal Leadership Program?

Quantitative Results. To explore doctoral students' perceptions of followership, the researcher analyzed results from Section IV of the Qualtrics (released in August 2022) survey, which contained Sy's (2010) IFT measure. This section consisted of a 10-point, 18-item Likert scale that measured perceptions of followership. Scores were based on participant responses from *not at all characteristic* (1) to *extremely characteristic* (10). A composite score was calculated for each of the two IFT scales: Prototypic (PT) and Antiprototypic (AP). The highest possible score for each scale was 90; the lowest possible score was 9. Analysis of the sample

data revealed a minimum score reported of 29 for Prototypic and 13 for Antiprototypic, with a maximum reported score of 90 for Prototypic and 66 for Antiprototypic. The mean score for all participants for Prototypic was 64.31 (*M* =64.31, *SD* = 12.78) and Antiprototypic 32.15 (*M* =32.15, *SD* = 13.14). The distribution of the results can be seen in Figures 26 and 27, respectively.

Figure 26

IFT PT Score Distribution

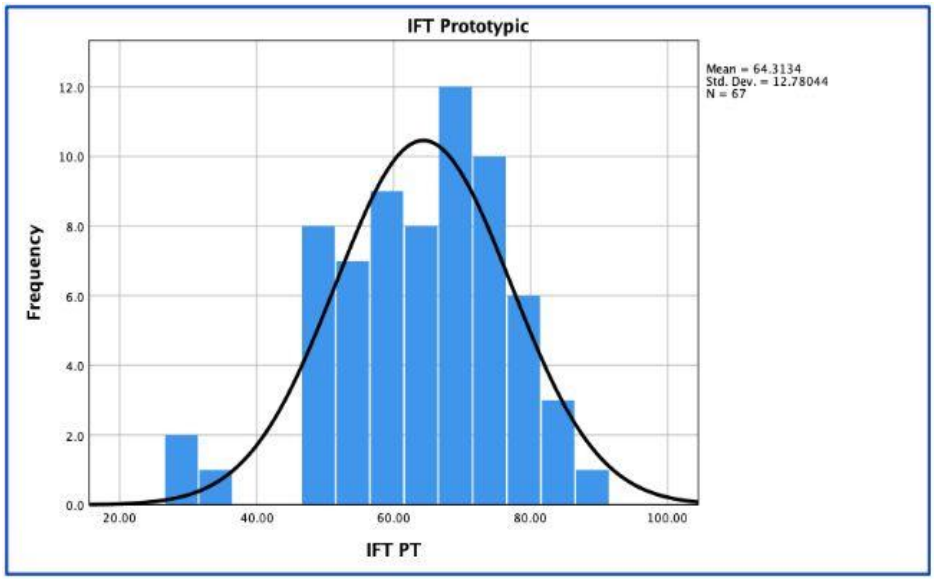
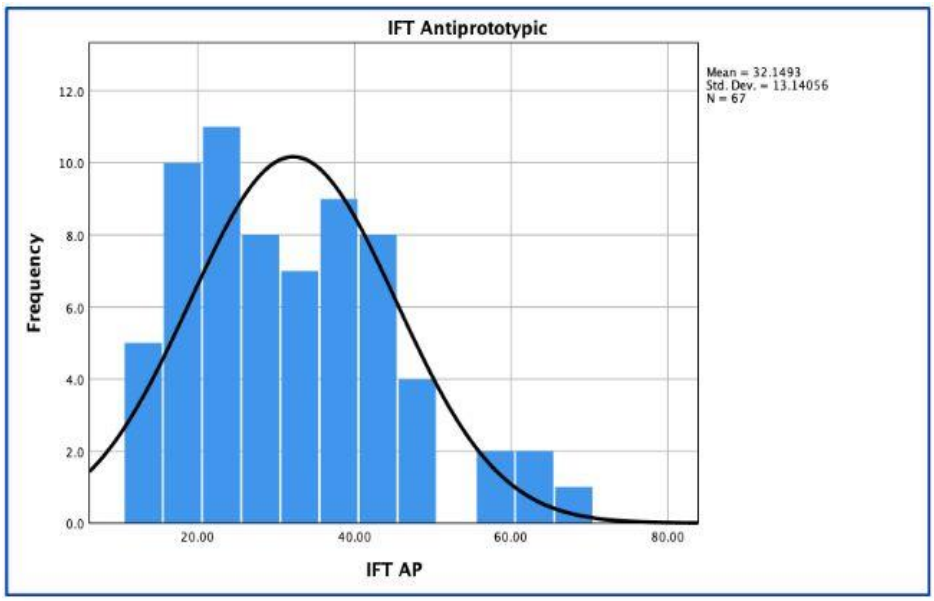


Figure 27

IFT AP Score Distribution



IFT Qualitized Results. According to Sy (2010), a higher score on the Prototypic scale is associated with a more positive view of followership. A higher score on the Antiprototypic scale is associated with a more negative view of followership. Based on the quantitative findings, the majority of participants in this study were qualitized as having a positive view of followership.

Qualitative Results. In addition to Sy's (2010) IFT measure, interview participants were asked questions to elicit their perceptions of followership and follower behaviors in relation to the leader. For example, “Are most people effective or ineffective followers? Why?” and “Please describe an effective or ineffective follower” (see Appendix D). These questions were asked to gain insight into their followership schema from the leader’s purview.

After multiple coding cycles, the researcher generated 32 initial codes from the interviews, including two a priori categories: a) prototypic and b) antiprototypic (Sy, 2010). A comprehensive list of the preliminary codes is shown in Table 22.

Table 22

Perceptions of Followership

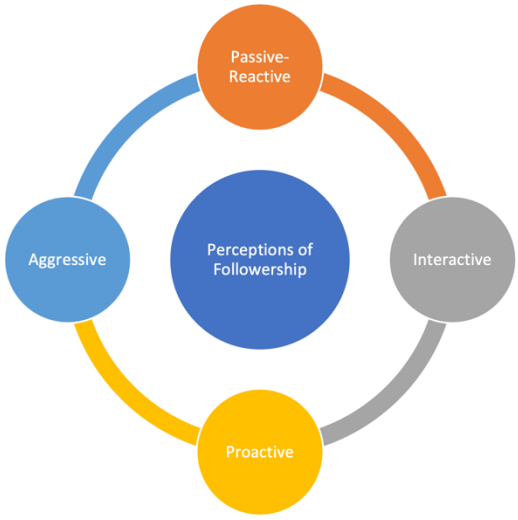
Preliminary Codes			
Prototypic (a priori)	Dedicated	Goes Above and Beyond	Antiprototypic (a priori)
Loyal	Self-Led	Team Player	Toxic
Change-Agents	Hard-Working	Supportive	Inexperienced
Problem-Solvers	Coachable	Engaged	Resistant
Effective	Collaborators	Critical Thinker	Wants to lead
Executes	Critical Thinker	Reliable	Underdeveloped
Agentic	Communicators	Takes Initiative	Leader Dependent
Takes Ownership	Proactive	Driven	Hostile

Note. Open coding.

Subsequent axial coding led the researcher to extract these codes from the data set and categorize them on a continuum from a) passive-reactive, b) interactive, c) proactive, and d) aggressive followership dimensions (see Figure 28). These thematic dimensions gave insight into how doctoral students in a formal leadership program perceive followership. Each theme contains properties related to the research question and is evidenced by the participants' remarks.

Figure 28

Thematic Dimensions of Followership Perceptions



Sub RQ 3, Theme 1: Passive-Reactive Followership Dimension

The first emergent theme within Sub RQ 3 was a *passive-reactive followership dimension*. For purposes of this study, this theme is defined by participants' perceptions that followership can be a) underdeveloped and b) leader dependent. These characteristics create passive followers who are reactive to the leader or task at hand. A summary of the passive-reactive followership dimension theme, including codes and phrases, is presented at the end of this section.

Underdeveloped Followership Capacity. The statements that emerged within this category revolved around descriptions of low followership capacity. The participants revealed this is due to an emphasis on the role of the leader in the leadership relationship. For instance, Jesse opined, "I think so much focus goes on leadership that people, unfortunately, don't think about the importance of followership, which is crucial to the success of an organization. So, it's underdeveloped because it's probably a lot less studied." Korinne concurred,

> I think we don't understand what followership is. I think it's a lack of knowledge of what a good follower is, a lack of seeing it from others, and a lack of appreciating the importance of followership. We don't focus on it in schools or in professional development. It's all about leadership, and I think if we started to focus more on followership, organizations would be a lot stronger.

Tripp corroborated the lack of followership praxis admitting, “It’s not a word I'd probably ever heard. I never heard it…I've heard of followers; well, there's the default, leaders *need* followers.”

It appears that because society emphasizes the traits and behaviors of the leader, the attributes of the follower get left behind. Jesse commented, “We don't focus on it. Everyone wants to be a leader, but when you look at it, how many people are actually [leaders].” It was evident that a lack of understanding of what it is to be a good follower correlated with *passive* followership behaviors. For example, Tripp commented,

> They lack an understanding of the tasks, and they don't seek clarification when they don't understand. They maybe smile and nod and say, *yeah…okay*. And then, when they leave the scenario, they don't execute their tasks. Or they do, but it's done wrong because they didn't understand it.

Korinne concurred, “They're not listening during meetings, they're disengaged, they're on their phone.” These depict passive behaviors of followers within the areas of active listening, seeking job clarity, and task execution. Furthermore, it was clear from the interviews that the participants believe followers with a low followership capacity rely more on their leader for directives and guidance.

Leader Dependent. This leader dependence surfaced when participants were describing inexperienced followers. Tripp noted, “The less experienced worker may be very motivated and ready to work and not know how.” When probed, Tripp divulged,

> They are limited, they don't have training, they don't know how the e-mail system works in the office, and they don't know how to use the phone system. They just don't know how to be the employee yet, and over time they learn those skills.

As leaders, the participants seem to understand they need to guide *passive-reactive* followers, evidenced by Tripp’s comment, “People might say, *yeah, I should do that, or we should do that*. But let's turn that into something.” He went on to say, “I think nurturing, not me assigning a task, *do this by five* but guiding the conversation so that they're telling me their deadline, *I will give this to you by five.*” On the flip side, followers may have the experience but lack the motivation to follow, as Jesse attested,

> I just don't know that people in middle management see themselves as followers where; you have to see that to be able to be good at your job, in my opinion. Because you have to follow the direction we're going, or it's not going to be effective.

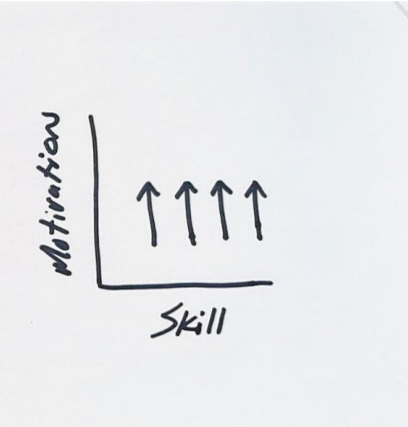
According to Tripp, keeping followers motivated is an arduous part of a leader’s job,

> I think the most complex thing to do is to motivate people to do what you know that they can and should do…I don't think there are people that are innately resistant; not everyone is a slug who doesn’t want to work. Although I've met those people, but oftentimes they're not sure yet how to be the most effective they can be in their work or not sure what work to do that's in front of them.

Tripp illustrated this concept, as seen in Figure 29, and explained, “You’ve got motivation and skill, and the leadership is trying to hold them up. As they gain their skill, how do you keep them motivated? The leadership is the motivation.”

Figure 29

Leader Influence



Point of Intrigue. This raises the point; can leaders strengthen the followership capacity of their followers? Jesse expressed an interesting comment relating to this question stating,

> I want them to learn how to be good followers themselves, but I can't teach people how to be good followers like that. I don't know if that's a skill you can teach someone as their leader. But I could be convinced otherwise.

On the contrary, Tripp attested,

> I attempt to give direct coaching in what [followership] means to me, like if we have a conversation in a one-on-one, either you're writing that down, or you're taking it away, and you're ready to tell me about it in one week when we meet again, and I don't want to have to microscopically assign that to you each time.

Table 23 summarizes the information presented for the passive-reactive followership dimension.

Table 23

Sub RQ 3, Theme 1: Passive-Reactive Followership Dimension

Methodological Triangulation	Theme	Sub-Themes	Phrases
LABS III Category: Antiprototypic	Passive Followership Dimension	Underdeveloped Followership Capacity	• It's a lack of knowledge of what a good follower is, a lack of seeing it from others. (Korinne) • They lack an understanding of the tasks, and they don't seek clarification. (Tripp) • They're not listening during meetings; they're disengaged; they're on their phone. (Korinne)
		Leader Dependent	• I think nurturing, not me assigning a task, *do this by 5,* but guiding the conversation so that they're telling me their deadline. (Tripp) • The less experienced worker may be very motivated and ready to work and not know how. (Tripp) • As a [leader], you want to make sure that you can change some of those individuals and develop them. (Kevin)

Sub RQ 3, Theme 2: Interactive Followership Dimension

The second theme to emerge within Sub RQ 3 was an *interactive followership dimension*. For purposes of this study, this theme is defined by participants' perceptions of followers as a) coachable, b) loyal, and c) engaged while working with their leader(s). These sub-categories are presented in detail with evidentiary comments by the participants. A summary of the interactive followership dimension theme, including codes and phrases, is presented at the end of this section.

Coachable. When asked to depict an effective follower they have worked with, participants' described individuals who were coachable. As leaders, they want to work with

followers who are open to feedback and can be developed. Korinne reflected on an experience she had with a student-athlete, “when we asked her to do something, it wasn't just, *okay, I'll do that*, it was like, *absolutely, yes, I will* and with enthusiasm and an understanding of what we were trying to do.” Kevin described what he expects in a follower, asserting,

> One thing we talk about when the individuals on our team go to vote for their [leaders]…This isn't based on a popularity contest. It is grades, how hard of workers they are, and can they communicate with the team.

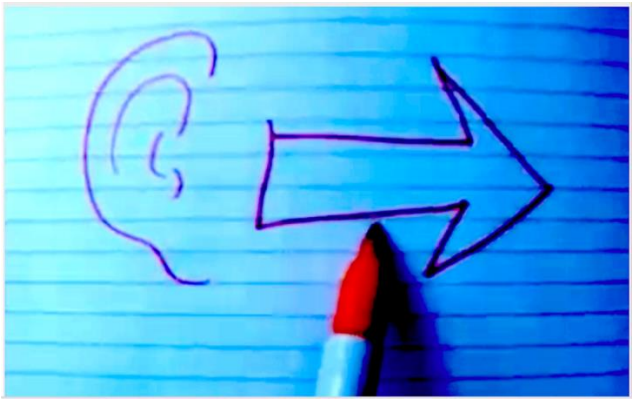
He went on to characterize a specific follower as “doing the right thing every day, coming in and working hard. He was an individual that was coachable.” When asked how strong followers would impact the team, Kevin opined,

> You want to make sure that you can change some of those individuals and develop them. You can change them for the better…But it doesn't always happen, and you can't get them all to buy into what you're saying. But if you could…it would make coaching so much more fun. Not that I don't love my job, but if it was just come in and every day is awesome, and you’ve got no issues, and the whole team has bought into the culture, that definitely makes your job a lot easier…It makes the program a lot better.

It was evident from the interviews that coachable followers are easy to lead. They can take direction and actively move toward organizational goals. Tripp illustrated this concept while describing effective followership, as seen in Figure 30, and explained, “It's a two-part picture. Listen and act. The arrow is taking action.”

Figure 30

Coachability



Loyalty. The second category to emerge within the interactive followership dimension was loyalty. As leaders, the participants expressed they assume followers will be loyal to the leader and team. Even if they do not agree with a decision, they expect interactive followers to advocate for the vision and execute their role within it. Jesse conveyed this idea by commenting,

> They are a believer and a supporter and are able to be leaned on in terms of executing what you want them to execute. They get it, and they will move it forward even if there's a part of them that asks questions. I think that it's important for them to feel like they can do that. And they respect me as a supervisor to know that they can ask questions. But at the end of the day, they're going to move forward with what I want to happen.

Maggie agreed as she described an effective follower she had worked with, claiming, "Her loyalty was one of the best characteristics of her followership."

Jade exposed what can happen if followers on the team are not loyal or supportive of the leader, "If they're not on board with you, everything can fail and fall apart." Kevin concurred, stating if he senses disloyalty within his team, he addresses it right away, "I try to bring them in.

Instead of complaining to your [teammates], come in and talk to me about it, and I'll do my best to fix it."

Engaged. The third category to emerge within the interactive followership dimension was engagement. The participants described interactive followers as engaging within their position responsibilities and the leadership process. For example, Tripp defined followership as "actively engaging in the tasks or mission of the organization." Korinne reflected on the behavior of an effective follower noting, "They were engaged, they were leaning forward, they were responding to the agenda, responding to questions that were asked by the leader or by others."

It appears the participants not only expect their followers to bring a high level of engagement; they believe their leaders expect the same from them. For instance, when asked if she would rather be recognized for her leadership or followership, Drew responded,

> My immediate reaction goes to followership because then the next supervisor that might be reading about or hearing about that reference can feel entrusted that this is an individual that's really connected and engaged in the objective at hand and will be committed and part of the team.

As the participants' descriptions of follower behaviors elevated, so did the proactivity level of the follower. This theme is depicted in the next section. Table 24 summarizes the information presented for the Interactive Followership Dimension.

Table 24

Sub RQ 3, Theme 2: Interactive Followership Dimension

Methodological Triangulation	Themes	Codes	Phrases
IFT Category: Prototypic	Interactive Followership Dimension	Coachable	• He was an individual that was coachable. (Kevin)
		Loyal	• Doing the right thing every day, coming in, and working hard. (Kevin) • When we asked her to do something [she'd say] *absolutely, yes, I will* with enthusiasm and an understanding of what we were trying to do. (Korinne) • They are a believer and a supporter and are able to be leaned on. (Jesse) • Her loyalty was one of the best characteristics of her followership. (Maggie) • At the end of the day, they're going to move forward with what I want to happen. (Jesse)
		Engaged	• They were engaged, they were leaning forward, they were responding to the agenda. (Korinne) • Actively engaging in the tasks or mission of the organization. (Tripp) • An individual that's really connected and engaged in the objective at hand. (Drew)

Sub RQ 3, Theme 3: Proactive Followership Dimension

The third emergent theme within Sub RQ 3 was the *proactive followership dimension*. Participants assessed followers within this dimension at a higher performance level than those within the Interactive dimension. For purposes of this study, this theme is defined by participants' perceptions that followers should be a) agentic and b) take initiative while working with their leader(s). These sub-categories are presented in detail with evidentiary comments by

the participants. A summary of the proactive followership dimension, including codes and phrases, is presented at the end of this section.

Agentic. The descriptions that emerged within the agentic category characterized followers as taking ownership, being self-led, and being autonomous while working with their leader(s). These concepts appeared to build off the behaviors within the Interactive Followership Dimension and represent the self-directed performance levels of followers.

For instance, when asked if followership is doing more than what is told, Maggie responded, “Yes, because you should be leading yourself as a follower. You should be able to hold your own dance space and contribute to that framework...I think autonomous followers are some of the best followers.” Jesse vocalized her assumption that followers should be self-led, commenting, “I will not be the person that is going to sit there and provide them with every single piece of direction because I believe they can do it, or I wouldn’t have hired them for that position.”

When asked to elaborate, Jesse asserted, “Being a good follower…what does that look like? That doesn't mean that someone is going to tell you exactly what you need to do; you need to think for yourself.” Tripp characterized an effective follower he had worked with, commenting, “This person I'm thinking of is very driven to complete work, has high expectations for themselves and others. Is quick to understand what needs to be done and is willing to do that.”

In addition, it appeared the participants believe followership behaviors are influenced by context and individual belief systems; as Drew proclaimed, “I would like to believe that everyone has their own internal set of values as to what they adhere to and what they believe in, and they are working off of meeting that in their day-to-day.”

Point of Intrigue. This was a compelling comment that uncovered Drew's perception that followership behaviors are related to an individual's values and cultural beliefs. When probed further, Drew poignantly opined,

> You're going to have people with different views, values, and perceptions on what is following. What does it look like? What does it mean? Is it necessary? And then you'll have different cultural beliefs, and you'll have some individuals that say, I will follow only these people, and this is why. Because this might be a cultural value or belief, and I will not follow these people because of said cultural value.

Based on this comment, it appears the participants believe followership schema will vary across cultures.

Initiative Taking. Furthermore, the respondents characterized proactive followers as someone who takes the initiative, asks questions to create clarity, and solves problems while working with their leader(s). Korinne expressed this belief by asserting,

> I think one person as a leader is not going to have all the answers, so you may find a better way. And actually, giving your [followers] the freedom to make decisions and to find a way to do it that might be different from what was in your head usually provides the best solutions.

Jade concurred, sharing her thoughts on the importance of followers taking the initiative within the leadership process by proclaiming, "Because [followers] are the ones that are doing the actual work, they come up with ideas to solve problems. Sometimes the leader doesn't even know that the problem exists."

These comments allude to the participants' belief that followers have the expertise to take on initiatives. Jesse reinforced this idea noting, "A lot of times, the leader's not doing much of

the work. They're orchestrating those that do the work to do better and be on the same page as others." Kevin conveyed this idea as he described initiative-taking behaviors by a follower in his organization, "he would gather them, and he would talk with them in the back. And he would discuss the things we could do better as a team and things he could do better as a [leader]."

The participants expressed the reasoning behind their assumptions that proactive followers need to take the initiative, as Jade attested,

> We need followers…otherwise, change will not happen…Followers are the backbone of any company. Without followers, we cannot make changes that are essential for the company, or it isn't possible, in my opinion, to make changes that are needed in *any* company without the followers on board…The more we recognize that, the better companies will thrive.

Table 25

Sub RQ 3, Theme 3: Proactive Followership Dimension

Methodological Triangulation	Theme	Codes	Phrases
IFT Category: Prototypic	Proactive Followership Dimension	Agentic	• You need to think for yourself. (Jesse) • You should be leading yourself as a follower. (Maggie) • Everyone has their own internal set of values as to what they adhere to and what they believe in. (Drew)
		Takes Initiative	• They come up with ideas to solve problems. (Jade) • He would get his [colleagues] together after practice and discuss the things we could do better as a team. (Kevin) • Giving your followers the freedom to make decisions usually provides the best solutions. (Korinne)

Sub RQ 3, Theme 4: Aggressive Followership Dimension

The final theme that emerged for Sub RQ 3 was an *aggressive followership dimension*. For purposes of this study, this theme is defined by participants' characterization of followers as a) resistant and b) toxic. These sub-categories are presented in detail within this section, followed by a summary of associated codes and phrases.

Resistant. While the participants primarily expressed positive perceptions of followership, they revealed experiences with followers who were resistant to change, ideas, or leaders. Furthermore, they expressed challenges in working with these types of followers. Kevin attested,

> They just don't believe in what I'm saying. And when I say that, not to make it about me, they don't believe in my philosophy. They don't believe in the way I run practices; they don't believe in my [leadership] style. So, they're not coachable.

Jade noted, “You can see their facial expressions because they're against suggestions that other people in the room are making. If they did not come up with that idea, the idea is not good.”

In addition, the concept that some followers struggle because they see themselves as leaders resonated with several participants. Jesse asserted,

> I think people are really bad at following. Especially in these types of positions, the middle management, as I would call myself. I see that's where a lot of my colleagues struggle. They see themselves as leaders and experts in their area, which they are. And feel as though they know better than our supervisor in things that they do. Which is true that they know their area better, but they don't see the whole picture, and I think that's where people really miss. Our supervisor has to see all the pieces of the puzzle; we just see one. So, if, for some reason, they're wanting to go in a different direction, it's because they see the whole puzzle. We just have a piece of it, and I think that's where people really falter and start questioning the supervisor.

Jade concurred,

> They may want to lead, or they want to be in the leadership role, they don't know how to follow…Say they have action steps toward a goal, they kind of nod in disagreement with those action steps because they believe that *because I am a leader, I want to lead...my steps are better than the ones that were suggested by the group*. So, some people just know how to lead, but they don't know how to follow.

Not knowing how to follow seemed to intertwine closely with the *resistant* category. Jesse provided insight into this concept,

> I don't think it's a topic we talk about at all, as something that we need the skills within our leadership positions to have because we're always in a follower role...even the President of the university and the United States has to listen to somebody. So, we're always going to be in a follower position. And so, it's kind of interesting to me that we never talk about it. We only talk about leadership in terms of being the one that's leading, which I think is why so many people struggle with it.

It was clear the participants believed resistant followers cause turmoil within the leadership relationship. Furthermore, as their resistance levels heighten, they can create a *toxic* culture.

Toxic. It appears this toxicity can permeate the team and influence other followers to resist or defy the leader; as Jesse proclaimed,

> Questioning everything that I do, not even in just the direction I'm trying to go, but any questioning of how I lead or that they don't feel supported in what they need to do. And really work against me and get others to work against me and create this environment where it's the supervisor against the supervisees, which is just the worst situation.

Maggie conveyed a similar sentiment when reflecting on *toxic* follower behaviors noting,

> I think there are people that are in follower positions that actually want to be the leader, and so they become very toxic followers because they're constantly questioning the leadership. They're questioning the process; they're questioning other followers; they're pointing fingers. They're not a team player.

Complaining, gossiping, and working against the leader were mentioned frequently when discussing ineffective followers. Korinne stated,

> If they are bad-mouthing the organization, bad-mouthing leaders, bad-mouthing other people, or undermining the vision or mission of the organization…And I'm not saying that you can't have your own thoughts, but if everyone agreed on a vision or a mission and you've provided as much input to that leader, but they're still going in a different direction, then I think you have to find a way to support it. And an ineffective follower will not find those ways.

These descriptions of insurrection continued as Maggie opined,

> They were not loyal. They bucked the system; they questioned every decision. They only brought counterpoints to any discussion, never were open to understanding the leader's point of view. Went behind the leader's back and formed alliances with people, and created a toxic culture. They're not what's good for the team; they're not what's good for the process. They're just in it for themselves.

Kevin conveyed how toxic follower behaviors can spread throughout the team,

> What happens is these freshmen come in…they see what the upperclassmen are doing. And they're bad role models for these guys, who maybe would have never thought they would have fallen into that trap, but they start seeing the upperclassmen doing this. So now they're like, *well, it's okay to do it here and there*, and then before you know it, they're doing it all the time. They actually can hurt your program more than they can help it.

Table 26 summarizes the information presented for the aggressive followership dimension.

Table 26

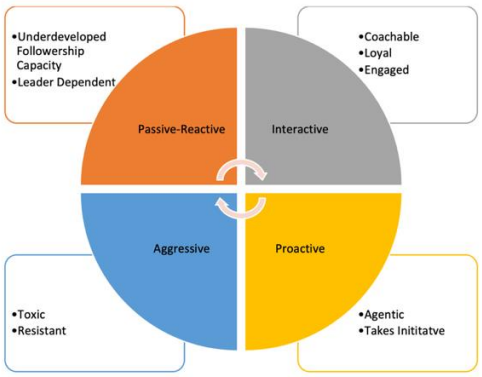
Sub RQ 3, Theme 4: Aggressive Followership Dimension

Methodological Triangulation	Theme	Codes	Phrases
IFT Category: Antiprototypic	Aggressive Followership Dimension	Resistant	• If they did not come up with that idea, the idea is not good. (Jade) • They're not coachable. (Kevin) • You can see their facial expressions because they're against suggestions. (Jade)
		Toxic	• They are bad-mouthing the organization. (Korinne) • They were not loyal. They went behind the leader's back and formed alliances. (Maggie) • Is this guy hurting our program more than he's helping? Do we cut him? You've got to weigh the pros and cons. (Kevin)

In summation, four themes emerged in exploring the followership perceptions of doctoral students in a formal leadership program. Figure 31 presents a concept map of the themes and associated codes presented within this section.

Figure 31

Perceptions of Followership (IFT) Concept Map



Note. IFT themes and associated codes.

Conclusion

This chapter presented the statistical results for the quantitative data analysis and the thematic results for the qualitative data analysis. In the quantitative approach, participants were qualitized as having an exemplary followership style, systemic thinking, and prototypic perceptions of followership. In addition, numerous themes emerged throughout the open coding process of the qualitative approach. Sub RQ 1 revealed four themes surrounding the participants' followership style: a) factors influencing followership style, b) active support, c) taking initiative, and d) developing rapport. Sub RQ 2 revealed two themes associated with the participants' leadership attitudes and beliefs: a) leadership is a collective process that is b) relationship oriented. Sub RQ 3 revealed four themes surrounding the participants' perceptions of followership along a continuum of a) passive-reactive, b) interactive, c) proactive, and d) aggressive followership dimensions.

The researcher developed the three sub-research questions to provide deeper insight into how doctoral students in a formal leadership program conceptualize followership. The synergy among this integrated analysis provided the framework to interpret this central research question. This interpretation is discussed in Chapter 5.

In addition, Chapter 5 contains an overview of the study and a discussion of the findings' significance in terms of research and practice. As "exploratory studies don't attempt to explain phenomena, but rather explore the worthiness of future research within a topic area," Chapter 5 concludes with recommendations for further followership research and closing remarks (Suárez-Sousa & Bradbury, 2022, p. 143).

CHAPTER 5. DISCUSSION

While most scholars would agree that a new paradigm of leadership is upon us, the role of the follower and the impact they have within an organization is often overlooked (Crossman & Crossman, 2011; Hurwitz & Hurwitz, 2015; Hurwitz & Thompson, 2020; Kellerman, 2019; Kelley, 1988; 1992; Komives et al., 2007; Rost, 1997). This omission is apparent within today's scholarly research as well as most formal leadership praxis (Foley, 2015; Hurwitz & Thompson, 2020; Kellerman, 2018; 2019; Nohria & Khurana, 2010). Consequently, what is being taught within leadership education is inconsistent with what students will face when they begin their professional careers. This raises the point, if followership is not being included within formal leadership education, how can that change going forward, and how can this research be a part of that change?

The researcher attempted to answer this by exploring how doctoral students in a formal leadership program conceptualize followership. As with any complex area of research, followership theory is ahead of the data. While there is a growing body of work related to followership education, there is a significant lack of research with practical implications. This exploratory mixed-methods study aimed to close this theory-data gap by conducting empirical research on followership within the context of higher education and, more specifically, with formal, doctoral-level leadership education students.

This chapter provides a discussion of the findings presented in Chapter 4. It is divided into six sections: a) overview of the study, b) interpretation of the findings, c) implications for change, d) recommendations for action, e) recommendations for further research, and f) closing remarks.

Overview of the Study

Research Design and Approach

After an extensive review of the literature surrounding followership, the researcher developed the following research questions:

RQ: How do doctoral students in a formal leadership program conceptualize followership?

- **Sub RQ 1:** What are the followership styles of doctoral students in a formal leadership program?
- **Sub RQ 2:** What are the leadership attitudes and beliefs among doctoral students in a formal leadership program?
- **Sub RQ 3:** What is the perception of followership among doctoral students in a formal leadership program?

The researcher answered Sub RQs 1, 2, and 3 using descriptive statistics and thematic analysis. The central research question is answered through the researcher's interpretations of the findings and is presented within this chapter.

Theoretical Framework

The researcher adopted a pragmatist research paradigm to best answer the aforementioned questions. This paradigm supported the researcher’s ontological and epistemological assumptions that reality is constantly changing and the best method to use is the one that solves the problem (Patel, 2015). In designing the study, the researcher used a combination of quantitative (i.e., survey research) and qualitative (i.e., instrumental case study) approaches. This mixed research design matrix was an equal status, concurrent design: (QUAN + QUAL), known as the triangulation design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017; Fraenkel et al., 2019). This methodological triangulation assisted in offsetting “each method's respective weaknesses” and provided a holistic answer to the guiding research questions (Fraenkel et al., 2019, p. 507).

Influential Theories

The results of this study were in line with a constructionist followership approach and Komives et al.'s (2007) Relational Leadership Model. In a constructionist followership approach, "people co-create leadership systems. What unifies ideas in this category is the assumption that leader and follower roles are fluid and socially constructed; individuals can hold multiple identities or none, roles can switch, and the theoretical focus is on how systems are constructed rather than how goals are attained" (Tolstikov-Mast et al., 2022, p. 33). Furthermore, the relational leadership model emphasizes leadership as a "relational and ethical process" that relies on the relationships of leaders and followers, and followers with each other (Wagner & Ostick, 2013, p. 33).

These theoretical approaches provided a framework for viewing the process of leadership as an influence relationship between leaders and followers. This influence is reciprocal, and leadership occurs through their interaction to produce change (Hurwitz & Thompson, 2020; Komives et al., 2007; Northouse, 2021; Rost, 1997; Wagner & Ostick, 2013).

Methods

The methods used to conduct this exploratory analysis included distributing a Qualtrics (released in August 2022) survey and conducting one-on-one interviews with a sample of doctoral students within a formal leadership program at a Midwestern, four-year public university. Convenience sampling was used at the site level, and purposive sampling at the individual level to recruit students within four doctoral cohorts. These students were degree-seeking doctoral students in the Department of Leadership and Learning and enrolled in the spring, summer, or fall 2022 term.

A total of 67 students completed the survey with a 70.52 % response rate. The majority (71.6%) of the survey respondents identified as women, and most fell within either the 42-57 (50.7%) or the 26-41 (44.8%) age range. Respondents predominantly described themselves as White (89.6%); the remaining respondents described themselves as Black or African American (6%), Asian (3%), and American Indian or Alaska Native (1.5%). The survey included 70 items within four sections comprised of demographics and the following three empirically tested and reliable scales:

- Kelley's (1992) Followership Questionnaire (KFQ)
- Wielkiewicz's (2000) Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs Scale (LABS-III)
- Sy's (2010) Implicit Followership Theory (IFT) measure

For the qualitative sequence, seven students were selected to participate in the one-on-one interviews. These 30–45-minute, semi-structured interviews were conducted in person and via Zoom. The data were analyzed in an iterative and evolving process using Creswell and Poth's (2018) data analysis spiral and NVivo (released in March 2020) software. The researcher used deductive (a priori), open, and axial coding throughout the qualitative data analysis.

Data Triangulation

The quantitative sequence aimed to determine students' followership style, leadership attitudes and beliefs, and their perceptions of followership. The qualitative section aimed to explore students' thoughts and experiences surrounding leadership and followership. All data were collected and analyzed concurrently to create a deeper understanding of how students conceptualize followership. "Convergence of findings between two methods enhances our belief that the results are valid and not a methodological artifact" (Bouchard, 1976, p. 268).

Limitations

As noted in Chapter 1, this study had several limitations. First, the researcher did not have the time or money to conduct a cross-cultural, multi-site study; thus, the findings are limited within the scope of this research. Second, the delimited scope of conducting this study within a single leadership program proves difficult to generalize the results. Third, the use of convenience sampling could have resulted in biased responses (Fraenkel et al., 2019). Fourth, the quantitative measures used a self-report method (i.e., explicit measure), which assumed open and honest responses about students' followership style, leadership attitudes and beliefs, and perceptions of followership.

Lastly, the study was limited based on voluntary participation, and the final sample was composed of primarily Midwestern, White students. According to Carsten et al. (2010), followership schema is likely to vary across cultures. Ergo, future research should examine the impact that cultural values have on the development of followership schemas and social constructions of followership. As Suárez-Sousa and Bradbury (2022) posited, “exploratory studies can be useful in generating ideas as to why certain phenomena may be, and as a result, exploratory studies prove fertile ground for future research” (p. 143). Therefore, additional ideas will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

Brief Summary of the Findings

Quantitative Findings

Table 27 summarizes the data detailed in Chapter 4 related to each quantitative measure. The median results were used to qualitize the quantitative data and categorize participants’ followership style, leadership attitudes and beliefs, and their perceptions of followership. The

statistical analysis of the quantitative data categorized the majority of participants as *exemplary followers* with *systemic thinking* and a *prototypic perception of followership*.

Table 27

Quantitative Summary of Findings

Variable	*n*	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*	Min/Max	Qualitized Data
KFQ IT	67	55.78	56.00	6.19	42/69	
KFQ AE	67	58.03	59.00	6.71	27/69	Exemplary Followers
LABS-III HT	67	43.45	44.00	6.52	28/61	
LABS-III-ST	67	23.03	24.00	4.37	14/34	Systemic Thinking
IFT AP	67	32.15	30.00	13.14	13/66	
IFT PT	67	64.31	66.00	12.78	29/90	Prototypic View of Followership

Note. Source: Doctoral Students in a Formal Leadership Program, $n = 67$.

Qualitative Findings

The qualitative analysis exposed the multifaceted experiences of the participants within leadership and followership. Findings revealed numerous codes linking the data to patterns of ideas that, once synthesized, emerged into themes. These themes unmasked participants' followership style, their leadership attitudes and beliefs, and their perceptions of followership.

Sub RQ 1: Followership Style. The researcher discerned four themes throughout the data analysis for Sub RQ 1: a) factors influencing followership style, b) active support, c) taking initiative, and d) developing rapport. Within these themes, participants vocalized a *sense of agency* to follow. They expressed a need to buy into the leader, vision, or organization. Once they made the decision to follow, they vocalized *mirroring expectations and behaviors* they had of their followers.

Participants described their followership style as actively supporting the *leader, organization,* and *team.* They expressed taking initiative to *problem-solve,* described acts of *going above and beyond,* and effectively *executing their role*. In addition, it became clear throughout the analysis that relationship building was a vital component of the participants'

followership style. With this, they shared the need to develop rapport with their team and leader through *connection* and *collaboration*. These themes were categorized within Kelley's (1992) exemplary followership style.

Sub RQ 2: Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs. As the research progressed within Sub RQ 2, the participants expressed their belief that a) leadership is a collective process that is b) relationship oriented. Findings revealed that participants *co-created*, *shared*, and *transferred* leadership throughout their team. In addition, they described their attitude that leadership is a *multidirectional* relationship based on the *influence* between leader(s) and follower(s). Moreover, these relationships should be developed *interpersonally* and derive from compassionate leadership. These themes were categorized within Wielkiewicz's (2000) systemic thinking.

Sub RQ 3: Perceptions of Followership. When asked to describe the traits and behaviors that characterize followers, participants revealed a dimension of attributes along a continuum of a) passive-reactive, b) interactive, c) proactive, and d) aggressive. Within these themes, participants described lower-level followers (i.e., passive-reactive) as having an *underdeveloped followership capacity* and being *leader dependent*. As followers strengthened their followership capacity and gained experience, they became more interactive with their leaders. Within this theme, participants described their assumptions that followers are *coachable* and open to feedback. They presume followers will be *loyal* and need to trust they are supporting the leader, team, and organization. In addition, they expect their followers to be *engaged* in the leadership process and the tasks at hand.

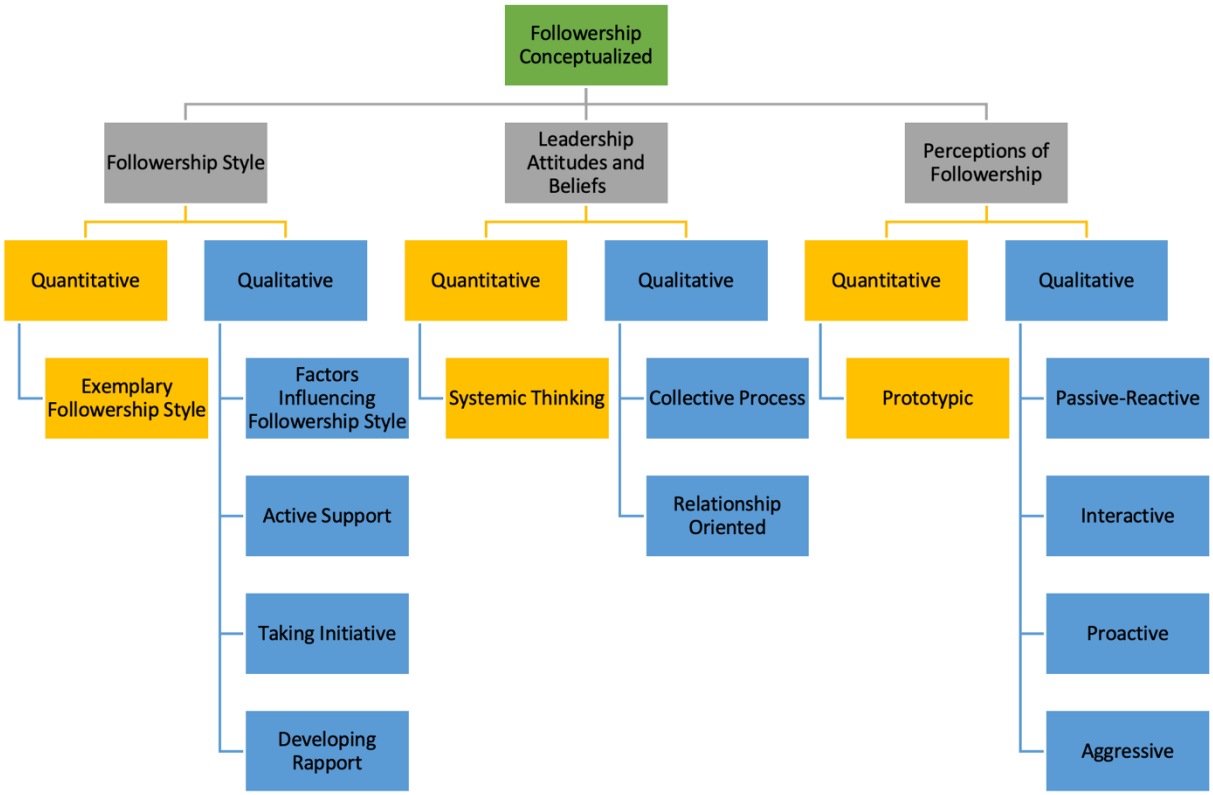
As followers continue to develop, the participants believe they should be proactive within the leadership process by bringing *agency* and *taking initiative*. The final theme to emerge was an aggressive followership dimension. These perceptions were formed based on participant

experiences with *toxic* and *resistant* followers. The passive-reactive and aggressive followership dimensions fell within Sy's (2010) antiprototypic IFT category. The interactive and proactive followership dimensions fell within Sy's (2010) prototypic IFT category.

As noted in Chapters 3 and 4, the final qualitative themes were utilized to diagram thematic interpretations and visually represent the data. This illustration (see Figure 32) provided the framework for a convergent analysis of the quantitative and qualitative results. The two were synthesized concurrently to interpret the research and sub-research questions. This interpretation is detailed in the following section.

Figure 32

Visual Representation



Interpretation of Findings

Sub RQ 1

What are the Followership Styles of Doctoral Students in a Formal Leadership Program?

The diversity of participants' experiences created a compelling exploration of perspectives within their followership style. The unifying thread of the mixed-methods approach was a shared intent to employ *exemplary* follower behaviors. "Followers' exemplary and courageous elements are significant as they represent a post-industrial shift in the follower-leader relationship" (Tolstikov-Mast, 2016, p. 115).

According to Kelley (1992), exemplary followers are committed to the organization and possess high levels of active engagement and critical thinking. The same can be said for previous typologies that correlate with high commitment and effectiveness levels demonstrated by Chaleff's (2003) *partners*, Blackshear's (2004) *engaged* and *exemplary*, Kellerman's (2008) *diehards* and *activists*, and the social construction of the *proactive follower* by Carsten et al. (2010). This continuum of follower behaviors corresponds with the follower's effectiveness levels and is in line with the *active support* and *taking initiative* themes that emerged in this study's qualitative analysis.

In addition, the respondents repeatedly mentioned the significance of *developing rapport* within the workplace. This theme aligned with Komives et al. (2007) relational leadership model, which focused on the idea that leadership is intertwined with relationships to accomplish change. Furthermore, it was clear that the participants of this study view the follower as a role, not a person. Within that role, it appears they believe they can actively shape the leadership process, a process of leaders and followers working together toward a common goal (Hurwitz & Thompson, 2020; Komives et al., 2007; Rost, 1991; Shamir, 2007).

Unexpected Findings. A surprising result of the findings was that participants revealed their followership style mirrors the expectations they have of their followers. In other words, the participants developed their followership style based on their expectations of what a follower should be. This socio-cognitive process forms the participants' schemas about the behaviors that characterize followers (Sy, 2010). These schemas have influenced how the participants define their followership style and, therefore, impact how they interact with others when they are in the follower role.

However, the participants did not express trying to be the type of follower their *leader* expects. This raises the point, what happens when a follower's style is not congruent with their leader's expectations? Perhaps this is because followership is not readily discussed between leaders and followers. "Leaders can create better followers, but only if they know what constitutes effective followership...To mentor effectively requires that leaders understand followership so that they can give precise, actionable advice" (Tolstikov-Mast, 2016, p. 26). Furthermore, if followers are unclear about their leaders' expectations, the researcher believes they should begin a conversation to create that clarity.

The data analysis also uncovered the participants will follow *if* they buy into the leader, vision, or organization. This is to say followers have agency and choose when to enact their followership style. While it is apparent the participants embrace their sense of agency to follow, it seems there is a rift in understanding the leader's influence with that agency. As the participants play multiple roles and often switch between leaders and followers throughout the day, perspectives on who has the power and influence to activate that choice differ.

It appears the participants believe leaders should create clarity in the organizational vision and *empower* vs. motivate followers to contribute to the leadership process. It is worth

noting that how the participants enact their followership style may depend on the style of the leader. Although, there was not enough participant data to support this notion as a theme.

Sub RQ 2

What are the Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs of Doctoral Students in a Formal Leadership Program?

In line with the quantitative findings of the LABS III (Wielkiewicz, 2000), the qualitative results revealed the participants employ systemic thinking. This type of thinking views leadership as a collaboration between leader(s) and follower(s). It dismantles the hierarchical perspective that positional leaders should maintain complete authority over decision-making processes. As with the results of Sub RQ 1, this represents a shift to a post-industrial leadership ideology. One that Rost (1997) defined as "an influence relationship among leaders and collaborators who intend real changes that reflect their mutual purposes" (p. 11).

The participants revealed they generally started their careers with hierarchical thinking that evolved into systemic thinking. These findings indicate that leadership experiences impacted participants' leadership development. Experiences they described as *co-creating*, *sharing*, and *transferring* of leadership. The *collective process* theme resided at the juncture of these three emerging categories. They contributed to the participants' beliefs that leadership is a collective process deeply rooted in relationships. Moreover, members of that process engage in a leadership relationship that is *interpersonal, multidirectional*, and *influence based*.

Because of this, participants are able to contribute to a collaboration of ideas and concepts regardless of the role they hold. Further, participants seem to believe there is a crossover of skills and abilities that benefit both leaders and followers. In the interviews, Korinne captured this concept proclaiming, "The best leaders are great followers." Kelley (1992)

supported this notion asserting qualities attributed to effective leaders also comprise effective followers.

Lastly, the leadership attitudes and beliefs of the participants parallel Shamir's (2007) co-created leadership process, which views followership as a relationship that is "co-created through the combined act of leading and following" (Northouse, 2021, p. 364).

Unexpected Findings. It is worth noting that although the thematic interpretations of Sub RQ 2 revealed the participants view leadership as a collective process that is relationship oriented (i.e., systemic thinking), there appeared to be tension between participants' hierarchical and systemic views. Throughout the interviews, the participants were cognizant of positional hierarchy and described their followership and leadership styles in relation to that hierarchy. For example, Kevin proclaimed, "I believe it starts from the top, and it's my role as the [leader] to lead by example." Maggie expressed a similar notion, "I think even within a distributed leadership [system], there's a person who runs point." Korinne revealed her thinking along a continuum noting, "I think a hierarchical structure is more effective in the beginning...but long term it will fail."

At the same time, the participants expect to contribute to the leadership process as a positional follower and facilitate the flow of information as a positional leader. Moreover, they believe they bring value to the group regardless of the positional role they hold. As there are societal pressures to function within a hierarchical system *and* employ a systems-based leadership style, the participants appear to be successfully balancing this tension. This paradox is consistent with previous research by Wielkiewicz and Stelzner (2005) as they proclaimed, "The more skill a positional leader brings to the task of balancing the tension between industrial and ecological processes…the more effective the organization will be" (p. 331). Fischer et al. (2015)

concurred, “The leader’s role is to optimize or balance the tension between the traditional hierarchical approach and the systemic approach. Neither approach can be pursued exclusively” (p. 2).

Sub RQ 3

What are the Perceptions of Followership of Doctoral Students in a Formal Leadership Program?

As noted within Chapter 2, “Implicit followership theories (IFTs) are defined as individuals’ personal assumptions about the traits and behaviors that characterize followers” (Sy, 2010, p. 73). Several theoretical frameworks have offered insight into the process by which IFTs impact followership perceptions. These emerging frameworks have been influenced by cognitive social psychology (Galambos et al., 1986). They are built on the foundations of Categorization Theory (Rosch & Lloyd, 1978) and Top-Down Cognition Theory (Galambos et al., 1986). The basic premise suggests that individuals rely on schematized knowledge to understand complex information.

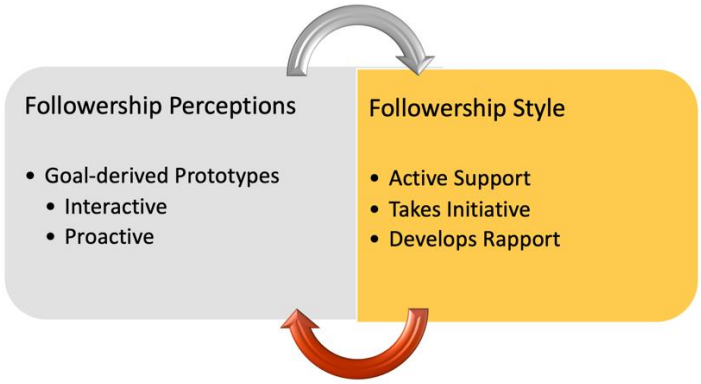
This study’s mixed-method approach generated a deeper understanding of participants’ IFTs by asking them to describe followers (i.e., quantitative approach) while exploring their thoughts, feelings, and experiences with followers (i.e., qualitative approach). Overall, the findings revealed that the participants’ perceptions of followership were not static---they changed slowly through repeated exposure to different followers (Lord & Shondrick, 2011). Further, they compared follower behaviors with prototypes that formed at an early age and developed through experiences (Sy, 2010). This supports the possibility of schematic changes that connect to follower perceptions, indicating that an individual's IFT could shift through consistent schema interruption and lead to a more positive or negative followership perception.

According to Sy (2010), this socio-cognitive process shapes the participants' followership schemas and influences how they perceive followers.

Furthermore, throughout the data analysis, respondents characterized their IFTs by central tendency prototypes (i.e., how followers are) and goal-derived prototypes (i.e., how followers should be). What is intriguing about the participants' descriptions of goal-derived prototypes was the similarity to how they depicted their own followership style (see Figure 33). These findings are consistent with the literature on implicit theories that *perceptions guide actions* (Hoption, 2014; Lord & Maher, 1991; Sy, 2010).

Figure 33

Perception-Behavior Link



The results also paralleled Sy's (2010) IFT research, which represents IFTs by a two-factor structure: Followership prototype (i.e., industry, enthusiasm, and good citizen) and followership antiprototype (i.e., conformity, insubordination, and incompetence). These factors and associated items were consistent with the themes that emerged within this study's qualitative analysis. A summary of this information is presented in Table 28.

Table 28

Followership Perceptions Summary

IFT Classification	IFT Factors	IFT Items	Qual Themes	Qual Codes
Prototypic	Industry	Hard-Working Productive Goes Above and Beyond	Proactive	Agentic Takes Initiative
	Good Citizen	Loyal Reliable Team Player	Interactive	Coachable Loyal Engaged
	Enthusiasm	Excited Outgoing Happy		
Antiprototypic	Conformity	Easily Influenced Follows Trends Soft-Spoken	Passive-Reactive	Underdeveloped Followership Capacity Leader Dependent
	Incompetence	Uneducated Slow Inexperienced	Passive-Reactive	Underdeveloped Followership Capacity Leader Dependent
	Insubordination	Arrogant Rude Bad Tempered	Aggressive	Toxic Resistant

Although the mixed-method approach for Sub RQ 3 yielded varying results, the most salient findings were that participants' followership perceptions occurred along a continuum of followership dimensions. Furthermore, these perceptions were contextually influenced and varied within or between individuals.

Previous research supports that “schema and context do not operate in isolation… schema helps us understand followership behavior in general. However, context will influence constructions around *specific* followership behaviors that are appropriate or acceptable in a specific environment” (Carsten et al., 2010, p. 545). This would explain why the participants depicted such a wide array of follower attributes.

Moreover, “It is highly likely that social constructions of followership will vary across cultures” (Carsten et al., 2010, p. 558). As noted in Chapter 4, Drew generated significant social insight into this concept stating,

> You're going to have people with different views, values, and perceptions on what is following. What does it look like? What does it mean? Is it necessary? And then you'll have different cultural beliefs, and you'll have some individuals that say, *I will follow only these people, and this is why*. *Because this might be a cultural value or belief, and I will not follow these people because of the said cultural value*.

In this sense, schema, context, and culture have influenced how the participants perceive followership and, by extension, how they enact followership.

Unexpected Findings. Two areas of intrigue emerged within the qualitative interviews surrounding the passive-reactive and aggressive followership dimensions (i.e., antiprototypic followership). First, can followership be taught? As noted in Chapter 4, Jesse vocalized the concept of underdeveloped followership capacity and asserted,

> I want them to learn how to be good followers themselves, but I can't teach people how to be good followers like that. I don't know if that's a skill you can teach someone as their leader. But I could be convinced otherwise.

The participants likely perceive that followership cannot be taught because they have not explicitly been taught themselves. They have developed their followership schemas implicitly through observations and experiences. However, research has shown that followership can be developed (Hurwitz & Thompson, 2020). Albeit, it is presumably easier to develop followership capacity for those within the passive-reactive followership dimension versus the aggressive followership dimension.

This leads to the second point of intrigue, at what point do ineffective followers need to be cut loose? One would assume that if followership can be developed, aggressive followers could transition into interactive or proactive followers. However, the participants perceived this followership style as *resistant* and *toxic* to the leader. As Kevin proclaimed, “Is this guy hurting our program more than he's helping our program? Do we cut him? You've got to weigh the pros and cons.” Furthermore, the participants vividly described their experiences with aggressive followership behaviors and how it impeded the group’s work, evidenced by the following comments pulled from Chapter 4,

- “They actually can hurt your program more than they can help it” (Kevin).
- “They're not what's good for the team; they're not what's good for the process” (Korinne).
- “They’re questioning the process; they're questioning other followers; they're pointing fingers. They're not a team player” (Maggie).
- “[They] work against me, get others to work against me, and create this environment where it's the supervisor against the supervisees. Which is just the worst situation” (Jesse).

What’s more, they believed this toxicity could infiltrate the team, creating motivation for followers to perpetuate toxic behaviors. Although these two followership dimensions (i.e., passive-reactive and aggressive) emerged as themes within the analysis, it appeared the

participants' assumptions about the traits and behaviors of followers lean toward a prototypic or positive perception.

In closing, the participants perceive followership along a continuum of behaviors that are influenced by an individual's followership schema, culture, and organizational context. As noted throughout this section, these findings were consistent with the previous research presented in Chapter 2.

Results RQ 1

How Doctoral Students in a Formal Leadership Program Conceptualize Followership

The three sub-research questions in this study were developed to understand how doctoral students in a formal leadership program conceptualize followership. Not only did paradigmatic corroboration occur between the quantitative and qualitative findings, but the analytic results provided an evolution of understanding of the phenomenon. The findings revealed the participants of this study employ an exemplary followership style, exercise systemic thinking, and hold a prototypic *and* antiprototypic view of followers. These results indicate the participants embody a post-industrial leadership paradigm.

Throughout the analysis, it became clear that the participants conceptualized followership as an emergent process between leader(s) and follower(s) working together toward a common goal. Furthermore, the participants believe the concept of what it means to be a leader or a follower within the leadership process is intertwined. In other words, they expressed followership as a role, not a person. They move in and out of this role within and between leadership relationships. Further, the skills needed to be an effective follower are equal yet dynamic to that of the leader.

As followers, the participants described themselves as actively supporting the leader, organization, and team while taking the initiative to go above and beyond in problem-solving and executing their roles. Further, they emphasized the importance of developing rapport with their leader(s) and colleagues because they view leadership as a collective process that is relationship oriented. Moreover, they believe they add value to that process regardless of the role they hold. Although their perceptions of followership encompass a continuum of negative and positive follower attributes, they assume that most followers are proactive and interactive in their work with the leader(s) and members of the organization.

It is worthy to note that the participants expressed agency to follow, and their implicit perceptions of what a follower should be guided how they enacted followership. These perceptions are influenced by their followership schema, culture, and context. Furthermore, they have developed their followership skills through experiential learning and observations. The overarching sentiment throughout the data analysis was that although followership is critical to the success of an organization, it is often overlooked and underdeveloped.

Implications for Change

As noted in Chapter 3, followership studies have been skewed toward quantitative and conceptual research. The implications of using a mixed-methods study allowed for deeper insight into students' attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions surrounding followership. Therefore, the findings of this research allow educators within this study's doctoral program to approach curriculum development from their students' current stage of followership conception.

As a result, educators will be able to build on evidence-driven curricula to infuse followership within leadership education. This curriculum should be conscious of leadership as a

system (e.g., leaders, followers, and context) and that followers have the agency to follow and create within that system.

Recommendations for Action

Higher learning institutions, and more specifically, leadership educators, need to pay attention to these results. Leadership and followership are intertwined and should be studied together to develop a balanced approach to leadership.

Program Standards

Therefore, the researcher recommends leadership program standards be modified to include followership. “Standards provide a framework for understanding how to best prepare, support, and evaluate education leaders” (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2018, p. 1). Consistency among standards “ensures a coherent continuum of expectations” (CAEP 2017, p. 10). These modifications should start at the national level (e.g., the Professional Standards for Educational Leaders (PSEL)) to provide a consistent framework for leadership program design and professional practice. These standards can then be adapted by universities to meet the needs of their leadership programs.

Introducing Followership

Subsequently, educators could use these findings to foster conversations about followership and launch new followership development opportunities within higher education. Followership could be offered as a standalone course, a practicum experience, a certificate, or a continuing education course on the subject.

However, as seen throughout the participant responses, students have a wide array of experiences and identities that contribute to their followership schema. This creates different

levels of readiness for the learner. Therefore, educators must continue to discern how their students conceptualize followership to allow for relevant praxis in the classroom.

Practitioners should use their interactions with students to provide clues to how they experience and interpret followership. For example, the Background Knowledge Probe (BKP) "is a focused questionnaire that students fill out at the start of a unit (or course) to help teachers identify the best starting point for the class as a whole" (The K. Patricia Cross Academy, 2021, section 1). Educators can utilize this research to shape the questions to determine how their students conceptualize followership and how to facilitate experiences that support learning from their current stage of understanding.

Multi-Method Approach

Furthermore, instructors should use multiple instructional models throughout the curriculum (e.g., role-playing, case-study, problem-based, and experiential learning-based approaches). According to Fischer et al. (2015), a "multi-method approach to leadership development, incorporating both cognitive and experiential methods," guides students to engage in the leadership process effectively (p. 19).

However, leadership and followership prove challenging to recreate within the classroom. "Candidates need multiple bridging experiences between course content and the realm of leadership practice" (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2018, p. 8). Experiential learning and case-based instructional models have been proven to support this type of learning (Johnson, 2019). As the social world is constantly changing, this allows for the ability to understand and prepare students for emerging educational issues. Bennis (Riggio et al., 2008) stressed the importance of this by stating,

> Great followership has never been more important, if only because of the seriousness of the global problems we face and the fact that they must be solved collaboratively, not by leaders alone but by leaders working in tandem with able and dedicated followers. (p. xxvi)

Program Review

It is worth noting that, to date, there is a serious gap “between what the leadership industry claims to do and what it does” (Kellerman, 2018, p. 141). Leadership and followership, as concepts, are abstract and difficult to evaluate, but that does not mean it is impossible to systemize how to assess program effectiveness. The researcher suggests the following action steps for a systematic leadership program review: a) define objectives, b) employ evaluation procedures, c) conduct comparative analyses, and d) perform longitudinal assessments.

Defining Program Objectives

As defined by Spaulding (2016), "evaluation objectives are written goals according to which the evaluation data will be collected and reported" (p. 15). Writing objectives within a program evaluation provides a yardstick for what data will be measured or collected. Clearly defined objectives and benchmarks allow transparency within the program's purpose and outcomes for stakeholders with a vested interest in its success.

Program Evaluation

Leadership programs could evaluate leadership and followership outcomes through a longitudinal, 360-feedback evaluation procedure. Spaulding (2016) recommended developing an evaluation matrix to guide this process. The matrix should detail the formative and summative objectives driving the program evaluation, the stakeholders involved, the data collection methods, and the evaluation timeline.

To assess followership learning outcomes, “change must be measured over time, within- and across-group comparisons, and criteria-based comparisons” (Komives et al., 2011, p. 193). Therefore, archival data drawn from student assessments, portfolios, and journals should be utilized. As it is challenging to quantify leadership and followership development, it would be vital to implement feedback throughout the program and track students’ progress several years after completion.

Comparative Analyses

To date, only a few studies have provided strategies for assessing student development within formal leadership programs (Kellerman, 2018a; Komives et al., 2011). Consequently, recommended next steps include conducting systematic and comprehensive evaluations of leadership programs through benchmarking, comparisons with peer institutions, and nationally adopted standards. The Multi-Institutional Study of Leadership (MSL) “provides comparative analyses with nationally normed benchmark data as well as peer institutions across both learning outcomes and high-impact learning experiences” (Komives et al., 2011, p. 197). The MSL survey is catered to undergraduate students but could be adjusted to meet the needs of graduate-level students.

Longitudinal Assessment

Furthermore, few studies have involved longitudinal research exploring student leadership and followership outcomes. Tracking “students post-graduation may assist in determining if what has been taught to them during their collegiate years had prepared them for their work and professional lives" (Foley, 2013, p. 219). Doing so would create a continuous process of learning and reflection, yet it proves difficult to measure, evaluate, or even predict its effectiveness. Stakeholders must distinguish between assessment for accountability and

assessment for improvement, as data are only as good as its usefulness. “If assessment studies are to be taken seriously...they must be conducted and reported in ways that build support among the various stakeholders and ultimately influence policy and practice” (Schu & Upcraft, 2000, p. 15).

Recommendations for Further Research

Followership is a rich and growing body of work with the potential to inform and shape our understanding of leadership. Based on previous followership literature and the findings of this study, the researcher recommends three areas for further research: a) current study expansion, b) global leadership research, and c) global followership research.

Current Study Expansion

The researcher conducted this study with doctoral students in a formal leadership program at a single institution. Therefore, the researcher recommends that the study be replicated across all graduate-level students. This would allow for exploring how students conceptualize followership regardless of their institution or leadership education experiences. It would also behoove researchers to explore how faculty who teach leadership conceptualize followership. Finally, within the context of expanding this study, further research is needed to develop cross-cultural tools for exploring followership style, leadership attitudes and beliefs, and perceptions of followership.

Global Leadership Research

Organizational culture is created through patterns of shared values, yet much of today’s research on leadership resides within a Western context. Therefore, "Leadership educators have much to learn from the intersection of culture and leadership, especially when focused on collaboratively working with others across diverse cultures” (Guthrie et al., 2016, p. 5). As

globalization and technology continue to increase the opportunity to work within multicultural teams, further research in this area is needed.

Global Followership Research

The Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness (GLOBE) program offers a look into global leadership but should also examine international and cross-cultural followership. Like leadership, "followership theory originates from a Western perspective" (Tolstikov-Mast et al., 2022, Hurwitz Followership Theory Review section). In addition, most of the current cross-cultural followership research "adopts Western theories, tools, and instruments" (Tolstikov-Mast et al., 2022, Part I section).

Culturally based follower prototypes suggest that both leaders and followers expect certain behaviors from followers and that those behaviors may differ depending on one's culture. For instance, a follower who does not display prototypic attributes may be seen as ineffective and be marginalized. As Tolstikov-Mast (2016) proclaimed, "Global followers are distinct from traditional followers due to the nature and outcomes of the global contexts" (p. 126). "Applying exclusively Western monocultural standards could lead to biased research, flawed study results, and non-replicable knowledge" (Tolstikov-Mast et al., 2022, Handbook Contribution section).

In sum, there is a call for researchers to use a balanced approach across a range of "paradigmatic assumptions and methodological approaches" within leadership education (Carsten et al., 2010, p. 35). In doing this, we must also account for cultural differences within the development of followership schema and followership behaviors (Carsten et al., 2010; Crossman & Crossman, 2011). Although followership research is still in its infancy, it is gaining momentum that could catalyze future empirical research that reverses the lens of how we teach leadership.

Conclusion

Through continual analysis and a synergistic approach to the findings presented in Chapter 4, the researcher could interpret how doctoral students in a formal leadership program conceptualize followership. The basis of this interpretation resided in the relationship between a) this study's methodological triangulation, b) previous followership literature, and c) the connection to followership theory. The qualitized quantitative results and thematic interpretations of this study revealed consensus with how the participants enact followership, their tension between systemic and hierarchical thinking, and how their implicit followership ideologies are intertwined with a post-industrial leadership paradigm.

These results *reverse the lens* of leadership research to better understand followers and followership (Shamir, 2007). The applicability of this would be to educate, train, and develop followership in conjunction with leadership. “Making the invisible visible allows for a productive discussion of followership and its implementation throughout an organization” (Hurwitz & Hurwitz, 2009, p. 81).

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Appendix A

Instrument Approval Letters

LABS III Instrument – Dr. Richard Wielkiewicz

Richard Wielkiewicz: Mon 2/8/2021 9:25 AM

You have my permission to use the LABS as described in your email. I have attached some relevant files. Richard M. Wielkiewicz, Ph.D.

IFT Instrument – Dr. Thomas Sy

Thomas Sy: Fri 2/5/2021 5:48 PM

This email serves as permission for you to use the IFTs instrument. Users of the IFTs scale agree to the following conditions:

1. Please do not publish/post the scale on the internet
2. Include the copyright notice in your publications (e.g., dissertation)
3. Make a request for further permission if any commercial use is desired

Thomas Sy, PhD

KFQ Instrument – Carol Mann Agency

From: Subrights Carol Mann Agency: Thursday, January 27, 2022, 4:00 PM

Thanks for reaching out! You are welcome to use the study.

Dani

Appendix B

Qualtrics Survey and Consent Form

Survey Information This is an estimated 10–15-minute, confidential survey on the topics of leadership and followership. The questions are divided into 5 sections:

(1) Consent Form
(2) Demographics
(3) Followership Style
(4) Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs
(5) Perceptions of Followership

Consent Form

Dear Participant,

The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You are free to decide not to participate or withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with me, the department, or the University.

The purpose of this study is to explore how doctoral students in a formal leadership program conceptualize followership. Quantitative data collection will occur for approximately three weeks, starting in September 2022, and will be gathered through this Qualtrics survey. Individuals involved in the data collection will include doctoral students within the Department of Leadership and Learning. There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this study. The expected benefits associated with your participation include a starting point for embedding followership education and training within a formal leadership program.

Do not hesitate to ask questions about the study either before or during participation. I am happy to share the findings with you after the research is complete. Because this study is part of a dissertation, only the researcher will know your identity as a participant. Your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way. Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed.

To help protect your confidentiality: (1) storage of data and notes will be kept in a secured location accessible only to the researcher. This project will involve survey and focus group interview results, notes, and transcriptions that will be stored on a password-protected computer. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue or refuse a follow-up interview at any time. Please get in touch with any questions about this study.

Acceptance to Participate: Checking Yes indicates that you have read the information provided above, and you have given consent to participate. You may withdraw from the study at any time

without penalty.

- ○ Yes

Demographics Gender Identity (Please select)?

- ○ Male
- ○ Female
- ○ Non-binary
- ○ Transgender
- ○ Intersex
- ○ Let me Type _____
- ○ Prefer not to say

Age Range How old are you?

- ○ 21-25
- ○ 26-41
- ○ 42-57
- ○ 58-67
- ○ 68+

Ethnicity Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No
- ○ Prefer not to say

Race How would you describe yourself?

- ☐ American Indian or Alaska Native
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Black or African American
- ☐ Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- ☐ White
- ☐ Write-in Option _____
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Followership Style

Please use the scale below to indicate the extent to which the statement describes you and your behavior in this situation. 0 = Rarely to 6 = Almost Always

1. Does your work help you fulfill some societal goal or personal dream that is important to you?

2. Are your personal work goals aligned with the organization's priority goals?

3. Are you highly committed to and energized by your work and organization, giving them your best ideas and performance?

4. Does your enthusiasm also spread to and energize your co-workers?

5. Instead of waiting for or merely accepting what the leader tells you, do you personally identify which organizational activities are most critical for achieving the organization's goals?

6. Do you actively develop a distinctive competence in those critical activities so that you become more valuable to the leader and the organization?

7. When starting a new job or assignment, do you promptly build a record of successes in tasks that are important to the leader?

8. Can the leader give you a difficult assignment without the benefit of much supervision, knowing that you will meet your deadline with highest-quality work and that you will "fill in the cracks" if need be?

9. Do you take the initiative to seek out and successfully complete assignments that go above and beyond your job?

10. When you are not the leader of a group project, do you still contribute at a high level, often doing more than your share?

11. Do you independently think up and champion new ideas that will contribute significantly to the leader's or the organization's goals?

12. Do you try to solve the tough problems (technical or organizational), rather than look to a leader to do it for you?

13. Do you help out other co-workers, making them look good, even when you don't get any credit?

14. Do you help the leader or group see both the upside potential and downside risks of ideas or plans, playing the devil's advocate if need be?

15. Do you understand the leader's needs, goals, and constraints, and work hard to help meet them?

16. Do you actively and honestly own up to your strengths and weaknesses rather than put off evaluation?

17. Do you make a habit of internally questioning the wisdom of the leader's decision, rather than just doing what you are told?

18. When the leader asks you to do something that runs contrary to your professional or personal preferences, do you say "no" rather than "yes"?

19. Do you act on your own ethical standards rather than the leader's or the group's standards?

20. Do you assert your views on important issues, even though it might mean conflict with your group or reprisals from the leader?

Leadership
The following scale examines **leadership** attitudes and beliefs.

Please indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement by checking the response that best represents your opinion.

SA = STRONGLY AGREE
A = AGREE
N = NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE
D = DISAGREE
SD = STRONGLY DISAGREE

1. Individuals need to take initiative to help their organization accomplish its goals.
2. Leadership should encourage innovation.
3. A leader must maintain tight control of the organization.
4. Everyone in an organization needs to be responsible for accomplishing organizational goals.
5. Leadership processes involve the participation of all organization members.
6. A leader must control the group or organization.
7. A leader should maintain complete authority.
8. A leader should take charge of the group.
9. Organizational actions should improve life for future generations.
10. The main task of a leader is to make the important decisions for an organization.
11. Leadership activities should foster discussions about the future.
12. Effective leadership seeks out resources needed to adapt to a changing world.
13. The main tasks of a leader are to make and then communicate decisions.
14. An effective organization develops its human resources.
15. It is important that a single leader emerges in a group.
16. Members should be completely loyal to the designated leaders of an organization.
17. The most important members of an organization are its leaders.
18. Anticipating the future is one of the most important roles of leadership processes.
19. Good leadership requires that ethical issues have high priority.
20. Successful organizations make continuous learning their highest priority.

21. Positional leaders deserve credit for the success of an organization
22. The responsibility for taking risks lies with the leaders of an organization.
23. Environmental preservation should be a core value of every organization.
24. Organizations must be ready to adapt to changes that occur outside the organization.
25. When an organization is in danger of failure, new leaders are needed to fix its problems.
26. An organization needs flexibility in order to adapt to a rapidly changing world.
27. Leaders are responsible for the security of organization members.
28. An organization should try to remain as stable as possible.

Perceptions

The following scale contains words that describe **followers**. Please use the 10-point rating scale to indicate the extent to which you believe each trait is characteristic of followers. Note: The information for this scale was removed per the author's request to not publish the scale.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1-18	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

End of Block: Followership and Leadership Research

Appendix C

Qualtrics Survey Raw Data

KFQ IT		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	42.00	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
	43.00	1	1.5	1.5	3.0
	44.00	2	3.0	3.0	6.0
	46.00	3	4.5	4.5	10.4
	48.00	2	3.0	3.0	13.4
	49.00	1	1.5	1.5	14.9
	50.00	3	4.5	4.5	19.4
	51.00	1	1.5	1.5	20.9
	52.00	4	6.0	6.0	26.9
	53.00	5	7.5	7.5	34.3
	54.00	4	6.0	6.0	40.3
	55.00	3	4.5	4.5	44.8
	56.00	6	9.0	9.0	53.7
	57.00	6	9.0	9.0	62.7
	58.00	2	3.0	3.0	65.7
	59.00	4	6.0	6.0	71.6
	60.00	7	10.4	10.4	82.1
	61.00	2	3.0	3.0	85.1
	62.00	2	3.0	3.0	88.1
	64.00	1	1.5	1.5	89.6
	65.00	2	3.0	3.0	92.5
	66.00	2	3.0	3.0	95.5
	67.00	1	1.5	1.5	97.0
	68.00	1	1.5	1.5	98.5
	69.00	1	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	67	100.0	100.0	

KFQ AE		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	27.00	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
	44.00	1	1.5	1.5	3.0
	45.00	1	1.5	1.5	4.5
	46.00	1	1.5	1.5	6.0
	47.00	1	1.5	1.5	7.5
	48.00	1	1.5	1.5	9.0
	51.00	2	3.0	3.0	11.9
	52.00	2	3.0	3.0	14.9
	53.00	3	4.5	4.5	19.4
	54.00	1	1.5	1.5	20.9
	55.00	1	1.5	1.5	22.4
	56.00	6	9.0	9.0	31.3
	57.00	5	7.5	7.5	38.8
	58.00	6	9.0	9.0	47.8
	59.00	6	9.0	9.0	56.7
	60.00	4	6.0	6.0	62.7
	61.00	5	7.5	7.5	70.1
	62.00	3	4.5	4.5	74.6
	63.00	5	7.5	7.5	82.1
	64.00	4	6.0	6.0	88.1
	65.00	4	6.0	6.0	94.0
	67.00	2	3.0	3.0	97.0
	69.00	2	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	67	100.0	100.0	

LABS HT

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	28.00	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
	30.00	1	1.5	1.5	3.0
	31.00	1	1.5	1.5	4.5
	33.00	1	1.5	1.5	6.0
	34.00	2	3.0	3.0	9.0
	35.00	1	1.5	1.5	10.4
	36.00	2	3.0	3.0	13.4
	37.00	2	3.0	3.0	16.4
	38.00	2	3.0	3.0	19.4
	39.00	5	7.5	7.5	26.9
	40.00	5	7.5	7.5	34.3
	41.00	3	4.5	4.5	38.8
	42.00	2	3.0	3.0	41.8
	43.00	5	7.5	7.5	49.3
	44.00	5	7.5	7.5	56.7
	45.00	4	6.0	6.0	62.7
	46.00	3	4.5	4.5	67.2
	47.00	6	9.0	9.0	76.1
	48.00	5	7.5	7.5	83.6
	49.00	1	1.5	1.5	85.1
	50.00	2	3.0	3.0	88.1
	52.00	3	4.5	4.5	92.5
	53.00	2	3.0	3.0	95.5
	56.00	1	1.5	1.5	97.0
	59.00	1	1.5	1.5	98.5
	61.00	1	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	67	100.0	100.0	

LABS ST		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	14.00	2	3.0	3.0	3.0
	15.00	1	1.5	1.5	4.5
	16.00	4	6.0	6.0	10.4
	17.00	3	4.5	4.5	14.9
	18.00	1	1.5	1.5	16.4
	19.00	3	4.5	4.5	20.9
	20.00	2	3.0	3.0	23.9
	21.00	7	10.4	10.4	34.3
	22.00	6	9.0	9.0	43.3
	23.00	2	3.0	3.0	46.3
	24.00	12	17.9	17.9	64.2
	25.00	6	9.0	9.0	73.1
	26.00	6	9.0	9.0	82.1
	27.00	2	3.0	3.0	85.1
	28.00	3	4.5	4.5	89.6
	29.00	3	4.5	4.5	94.0
	30.00	1	1.5	1.5	95.5
	31.00	2	3.0	3.0	98.5
	34.00	1	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	67	100.0	100.0	

IFT PT		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	29.00	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
	30.00	1	1.5	1.5	3.0
	34.00	1	1.5	1.5	4.5
	47.00	1	1.5	1.5	6.0
	49.00	2	3.0	3.0	9.0
	50.00	2	3.0	3.0	11.9
	51.00	3	4.5	4.5	16.4
	52.00	1	1.5	1.5	17.9
	53.00	1	1.5	1.5	19.4
	54.00	1	1.5	1.5	20.9
	55.00	3	4.5	4.5	25.4
	56.00	1	1.5	1.5	26.9
	57.00	1	1.5	1.5	28.4
	58.00	4	6.0	6.0	34.3
	59.00	4	6.0	6.0	40.3
	62.00	2	3.0	3.0	43.3
	63.00	1	1.5	1.5	44.8
	64.00	1	1.5	1.5	46.3
	66.00	4	6.0	6.0	52.2
	67.00	2	3.0	3.0	55.2
	68.00	2	3.0	3.0	58.2
	69.00	3	4.5	4.5	62.7
	70.00	1	1.5	1.5	64.2
	71.00	4	6.0	6.0	70.1
	73.00	2	3.0	3.0	73.1
	74.00	3	4.5	4.5	77.6
	75.00	1	1.5	1.5	79.1
	76.00	4	6.0	6.0	85.1
	78.00	1	1.5	1.5	86.6
	79.00	2	3.0	3.0	89.6
	80.00	1	1.5	1.5	91.0
	81.00	2	3.0	3.0	94.0
	83.00	2	3.0	3.0	97.0
	86.00	1	1.5	1.5	98.5
	90.00	1	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	67	100.0	100.0	

IFT AP		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	13.00	2	3.0	3.0	3.0
	14.00	2	3.0	3.0	6.0
	15.00	1	1.5	1.5	7.5
	16.00	1	1.5	1.5	9.0
	17.00	3	4.5	4.5	13.4
	18.00	3	4.5	4.5	17.9
	19.00	2	3.0	3.0	20.9
	20.00	1	1.5	1.5	22.4
	22.00	5	7.5	7.5	29.9
	23.00	2	3.0	3.0	32.8
	24.00	3	4.5	4.5	37.3
	25.00	1	1.5	1.5	38.8
	28.00	1	1.5	1.5	40.3
	29.00	5	7.5	7.5	47.8
	30.00	2	3.0	3.0	50.7
	31.00	1	1.5	1.5	52.2
	33.00	2	3.0	3.0	55.2
	34.00	3	4.5	4.5	59.7
	35.00	1	1.5	1.5	61.2
	36.00	2	3.0	3.0	64.2
	38.00	3	4.5	4.5	68.7
	39.00	2	3.0	3.0	71.6
	40.00	2	3.0	3.0	74.6
	41.00	2	3.0	3.0	77.6
	42.00	2	3.0	3.0	80.6
	43.00	2	3.0	3.0	83.6
	44.00	1	1.5	1.5	85.1
	45.00	1	1.5	1.5	86.6
	47.00	1	1.5	1.5	88.1
	48.00	1	1.5	1.5	89.6
	49.00	1	1.5	1.5	91.0
	50.00	1	1.5	1.5	92.5
	57.00	1	1.5	1.5	94.0
	60.00	1	1.5	1.5	95.5
	62.00	2	3.0	3.0	98.5
	66.00	1	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	67	100.0	100.0	

Gender Identity (Please select)? - Selected Choice

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Male	18	26.9	26.9	26.9
	Female	48	71.6	71.6	98.5
	Prefer not to say	1	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	67	100.0	100.0	

Gender Identity (Please select)? - Let me Type - Text

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	67	100.0	100.0	100.0

How old are you?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	21-25	1	1.5	1.5	1.5
	26-41	30	44.8	44.8	46.3
	42-57	34	50.7	50.7	97.0
	58-67	2	3.0	3.0	100.0
	Total	67	100.0	100.0	

Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or of Spanish origin?

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	2	3.0	3.0	3.0
	No	64	95.5	95.5	98.5
	Prefer not to say	1	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	67	100.0	100.0	

How would you describe yourself? - Selected Choice American Indian or Alaska Native

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	American Indian or Alaska Native	1	1.5	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	66	98.5		
Total		67	100.0		

How would you describe yourself? - Selected Choice Asian

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Asian	2	3.0	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	65	97.0		
Total		67	100.0		

How would you describe yourself? - Selected Choice Black or African American

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Black or African American	4	6.0	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	63	94.0		
Total		67	100.0		

How would you describe yourself? - Selected Choice Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

		Frequency	Percent
Missing	System	67	100.0

How would you describe yourself? - Selected Choice White

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	White	60	89.6	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	7	10.4		
Total		67	100.0		

How would you describe yourself? - Selected Choice Write-in Option

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Write-in Option	2	3.0	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	65	97.0		
Total		67	100.0		

How would you describe yourself? - Selected Choice Prefer not to say

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Prefer not to say	1	1.5	100.0	100.0
Missing	System	66	98.5		
Total		67	100.0		

How would you describe yourself? - Write-in Option - Text

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid		65	97.0	97.0	97.0
	Mexican	1	1.5	1.5	98.5
	other	1	1.5	1.5	100.0
	Total	67	100.0	100.0	

Appendix D

Interview Guide

Note: The researcher conducted semi-structured interviews. The questions below are not a verbatim portrayal of what was asked. Elaborative, clarifying, and contrast probes were used to enhance the richness of the responses.

Introduction

Introduce yourself, be primarily a listener, and record and take hand-written notes. In the end - thank them and ensure anonymity and confidentiality of the data. Ask them if they would be willing to verify the transcript at a later date for member checking.

- Use elaborative probes to query their reactions to acts of followership in these contexts.
- Use contrast probes to inquire about followership behavior in different contexts.

Sub RQ 2 Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs

- Think about someone in your experience that has been an effective leader. What specific behaviors or characteristics did this person have?
- Think about someone that was an ineffective leader; what specific behaviors or characteristics did this person have?
- When you are the leader of the group, what is your role with others?
- When you are **not** the leader of the group, what is your role with others?
- At the beginning of your career, what did you think leadership was, and what do you think it is now?

RQ 1 Conceptualizing Followership

- Think about someone in your experience that has been an effective follower. What specific behaviors or characteristics did this person have?
- Think about someone that was an ineffective leader; what specific behaviors or characteristics did this person have?
- Is followership more than doing what is told? yes/no
    - Please elaborate.
- Does everyone know how to follow? yes/no
    - Please elaborate.
- In your experience, have you seen followership be under-acknowledged, underrated, or underdeveloped?
    - Please elaborate.
- If at all, how much impact do you think strong followership would have on your team?
- What comes to mind when you think of followership within your team or organization?
- Please draw what you think followership looks like.
    - Describe

Sub RQ 1 Followership Style

- How would you describe yourself as a follower?
- Have your followership skills changed as you have gained more leadership experience?
- Are you better at leadership or followership?

Sub RQ 3 Perceptions of Followership

- Do you think most individuals are effective or ineffective followers?
    - Why?
- Would you rather be in a leader or follower role?
    - Why?
- Would you rather be recognized for strong followership or strong leadership?
    - Why?

Conclusion of interview

At this time, is there anything else you would like to discuss or add about your experiences with followership? Thank you for sharing your personal insights and experiences surrounding followership and leadership. To ensure all the information we have discussed is an accurate portrayal of your thoughts, I will provide you with a transcribed version of the interview in its entirety for you to read over. Please let me know if anything needs to be fixed or clarified.

Appendix E

Study Details Sent to Students

Greetings,

I am reaching out to see if you would be willing to participate in a 10–15-minute survey for my dissertation research titled, "How Doctoral Students in a Formal Leadership Program Conceptualize Followership: A Mixed Methods Study." The aim of the research is to reveal students' leadership attitudes and beliefs, followership style, and perceptions of followership.

You have been identified as a potential participant in this study because you are a doctoral student within the Leadership and Learning Department. Data collection will occur for approximately three weeks, with a potential close date of October 21, 2022.

Please let me know if you have any questions, thank you for your time and consideration.

Appendix F

Study Permission

To whom it may concern,

This is a letter of permission to complete a mixed-methods research study on the perceptions and value doctoral-level students place on followership within the Department of Leadership and Learning.

Sincerely,

Interim Dean

Graduate Studies and Extended Learning

Date: September 8, 2021

Subject: Permission to Conduct Research within CEHS

This letter is provided to verify my approval for you to recruit a minimum of 30 students within the Department of Leadership and Learning to participate in an anonymous online survey for your research study entitled, “How Doctoral Students in a Formal Leadership Program Conceptualize Followership.”

Dean of College of Education

Appendix G

Information for Interview Participants

Thank you for your interest in participating in my dissertation research. I am attaching the consent form and detailed information about this study. Please let me know if you have any questions. The title of my study is: How Doctoral Students in a Formal Leadership Program Conceptualize Followership: A Mixed Methods Study. I anticipate the interview will take about 45 minutes. It will include semi-structured questions surrounding your thoughts and experiences with leadership and followership. I have attached the consent form along with possible dates and times for the interview.

The following information is provided for you to decide whether you wish to participate in the present study. You are free to decide not to participate or withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with me, the department, or with this University.

The purpose of this study is to understand how doctoral students in a formal leadership program conceptualize followership. Data collection will occur for approximately three weeks, starting in September 2022, and will be gathered through one-on-one interviews, a focus group, and a Qualtrics (released in August 2022) survey. Individuals involved in the data collection will include doctoral students within the Department of Leadership and Learning. There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this study. The expected benefits associated with your participation include a starting point for embedding followership education and training within a formal leadership program.

Do not hesitate to ask questions about the study either before or during participation. I am happy to share the findings with you after the research is complete. If you participate in the interview portion of this study, the researcher requests that you review the transcript to ensure accuracy. Because this study is part of a dissertation, only the researcher will know your identity as a participant. Your name will not be associated with the research findings in any way. Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will not be disclosed. You may use a pseudonym if desired. To help protect your confidentiality: (1) storage of data and notes will be kept in a secured location accessible only to the researcher.

This project will involve survey and interview recordings, notes, and transcriptions that will be stored on a password-protected computer. If you decide to participate, you are free to discontinue or refuse a follow-up interview at any time. Please get in touch with any questions about this study.

Acceptance to Participate: If you accept, please reply to this email stating that you have read this consent form and you agree to participate, or check yes and sign/date below indicating that you have read the information provided above and you have given consent to participate. You may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Appendix H

Qualitative Codebook

Followership Style

Name	Description
Sub RQ 1	
Active Support	Actively supporting the leader, organization, or mission. Asking questions, creating clarity, inserting themselves in areas of strength and need. Engaging with others in the organization and the tasks at hand. Finding ways to efficiently and effectively contribute to the strategic plan and mission of the organization. Forwarding the goals of others and contributing where necessary.
Leader Support	When I'm not the leader of the group, I try to be the VP, the next leader in line. (Drew) Just trying to see how I can help the leader in their role and really supporting them. (Drew) What I really try to do in all aspects is just support in the best way I know how. (Jesse)
Organizational Support	Without followers, we cannot make changes that are essential for the company. (Jade) If everyone agreed on a vision or a mission, I think you have to find a way to support it. (Korinne) Everyone was engaged and trying to be not only competitive against our starters but also supportive in how they could help the organization. (Korinne)
Team Support	It's still similar to how it looks when I am a leader and just trying to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the group and see how we can strive to achieve cohesiveness (Drew) Sometimes it can become easy just to watch practice when I'm not the one running it. So, making sure you're going around and helping them, especially technically. (Kevin) How can I help them improve? How can I help them accomplish their goals and our vision. So, it's all about us together as a team (Korinne)
Developing Rapport	Establishing and developing relationships with stakeholders (e.g., leader, members of the team, and colleagues throughout the institution). Collaborating, being easy to work with (e.g., positive attitude, active listening, respectful), and creating connection.
Collaboration	I tried to listen and to cooperate and to work with others. (Jade) I'm kind of that middle person, I'm a follower still. I'm relaying information and communicating both ways. (Korinne) Conversation is open and everybody's opinions are welcomed. (Maggie)
Connection	Honesty would be another one that I highly value because I'm really someone that wants feedback, and so honest feedback, in a caring way and through a lens of improvement is really important. (Jesse) I think bringing the group together. I think that's a big part of having a successful program.

Name	Description
	(Kevin) My style of followership is I want to make a connection with that leader. (Maggie)
Factors Influencing Followership Style	The participants' sense of agency to follow and a mirroring of their follower expectations and behaviors. Whether the participants' buy into the leader, vision, mission, or organization impacts their followership style.
Mirroring Expectations and Behaviors	I try to really be the employee that I want to have. (Jesse) I know how to be a really good follower because I know what I want from my followers. (Jesse) Having ineffective followers...I think you learn what not to do, so to speak. And so that probably helps the education of followership. (Korinne)
Sense of Agency	Being a follower, the challenge is if I don't believe in it, if I don't see value in it, if I don't find it fulfilling, then it's a lot more challenging for me to feel connected there. (Drew) I knew that without their support, we couldn't get anything done. (Jade) My end all is really if I don't agree with the way they're leading in terms of the direction we're going, then I need to leave. (Jesse)
Taking Initiative	Taking the initiative to problem solve. Going above and beyond to better the team or organization and executing their role to the best of their ability.
Going Above and Beyond	It is going above and beyond. You're not just meeting the bare minimum because again, you're working on meeting expectations across all different levels. (Drew) If you want to be good at what you do and really support your supervisor, you're going to go above and beyond what they're asking you to do. (Jesse) I've got to make sure that I get hands-on with them, and I help out. (Kevin)
Problem-Solving	I want to say maybe innovative because I'd like to think I take where we're trying to go and make my own innovation of it. (Jesse) I'm a very creative thinker. So, I offer ideas that probably not a lot of people think of, and I'm not scared to say them. (Korinne) The process of that person making their big decisions also has to do with me in my level of leadership. (Maggie)
Role Execution	Being proactive in achieving tasks or assignments or at the broadest level, knowing and understanding the job description and taking action on the next thing. (Tripp) It all depends on where I am. Right now, I'm a follower. If I am recognized as a strong follower, I'm fine because wherever I am, I want to do my best. That is it. Wherever, whatever position I am in, I want to put my 100 plus percent there. (Jade)

Leadership Attitudes and Beliefs

Name	Description
Sub RQ 2	
Collective Process	Leadership is an emergent process between leader(s) and follower(s). It is co-created, shared, and transferred.
Leadership is Co-Created	We only talk about leadership in terms of being the one that's leading, which I think is why so many people struggle with it. (Jesse) Leadership is misunderstood. We classify it for power...When really it is a collective process. (Maggie)
Leadership is Shared	My preference is always to build the decision together because I have asked those stakeholders to be a part of the process, and I want their voices to be a part of it. (Maggie) I think being a leader is teaching others how to be leaders too. (Kevin)
Leadership is Transferred	It's not all about being the one that's in charge and always having them hear your voice. But teaching your [followers] and teaching your assistants how to be leaders and then learning from them. (Kevin) A good follower can take on initiatives and push them forward, and to do that, a good follower needs to have people around them helping and supporting. (Korinne) My goal is that one day they have the tools to be a leader; they've been given the opportunity that could make them a leader l
Relationship Oriented	Leadership is a collective process that is relationship oriented. This relationship is multidirectional, interchangeable, and influence based.
Influence Based	I strive to instill a message to my students that I am their teacher just as much as they are mine. (Drew) I want to contribute, so I find a way to do that out front or behind the scenes. (Maggie) I think the leader needs to teach others how to lead. (Kevin)
Interpersonal	I think there's this myth that we can't be human and still be good leaders. (Jesse) I make a conscious effort to put myself in others' shoes. (Drew) I was able to show them that I understand and validate their challenges. (Tripp)
Multidirectional	I think you can be a leader and a follower based on what you are doing. (Korinne) I don't think we need to be pinged into I am a leader or a follower. (Tripp) I'm a director, but I'm not the ultimate leader. I'm kind of that middle person; I'm a follower still. I'm relaying information and communicating both ways. (Korinne)

Perceptions of Followership

Name	Description
Sub RQ 3	
Aggressive	Followers can be resistant or even toxic to the leader(s) or organization.
Resistant	If they did not come up with that idea, the idea is not good. (Jade) They're not coachable. (Kevin) You can see their facial expressions because they're against suggestions. (Jade)
Toxic	They were not loyal. They went behind the leader's back and formed alliances. (Maggie) Is this guy hurting our program more than he's helping? Do we cut him? You've got to weigh the pros and cons. (Kevin)
Interactive	Followers should be coachable, engaged, and loyal
Coachable	He was an individual that was coachable. (Kevin) Doing the right thing every day, coming in, and working hard. (Kevin) When we asked her to do something [she'd say] absolutely, yes, I will with enthusiasm and an understanding of what we were trying to do. (Korinne)
Engaged	They were engaged, they were leaning forward, they were responding to the agenda. (Korinne) Actively engaging in the tasks or mission of the organization. (Tripp) An individual that's really connected and engaged in the objective at hand. (Drew)
Loyal	They are a believer and a supporter and are able to be leaned on. (Jesse) Her loyalty was one of the best characteristics of her followership. (Maggie) At the end of the day, they're going to move forward with what I want to happen. (Jesse)
Proactive	Agentic (takes ownership, self-led, autonomous), Critical Thinker, Takes Initiative. Goes Above and Beyond.
Agentic	You need to think for yourself. (Jesse) You should be leading yourself as a follower. (Maggie) Everyone has their own internal set of values as to what they adhere to and what they believe in. (Drew)
Takes Initiative	They come up with ideas to solve problems. (Jade) He would get his [colleagues] together after practice and discuss the things we could do better as a team. (Kevin) Giving your followers the freedom to make decisions usually provides the best solutions. (Korinne)
Reactive	Leader Dependent, Underdeveloped Followership Capacity
Leader Dependent	I think nurturing, not me assigning a task, do this by 5, but guiding the conversation so that they're telling me their deadline. (Tripp) The less experienced worker may be very motivated and ready to work and not know how. (Tripp) As a [leader], you want to make sure that you can change some of those individuals and develop them. (Kevin)

Name	Description
Underdeveloped Followership Capacity	It's a lack of knowledge of what a good follower is, a lack of seeing it from others. (Korinne) They lack an understanding of the tasks, and they don't seek clarification. (Tripp) They're not listening during meetings, they're disengaged, they're on their phone. (Korinne)