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An Exploratory Study Investigating Leader and Follower Characteristics at U.S. Healthcare Organizations¹

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Leadership has been studied by a myriad of scholars in the 20th and 21st centuries. One recent stream of research focuses on the followers of leaders. Today, followership is recognized as a construct that has value, and there is a broad call for additional research in this area (Gardner *et al.*, 2005; Howell and Shamir, 2005.) In this study, the authors propose hypotheses that focus on followers and on their adoption of characteristics that are leader-like. The central thesis in this study is that followers have the ability to share roles with leaders. To test that thesis, a model is presented of specific leader and follower behaviors that (a) are thought to be related and overlapping, and (b) are relevant to role-sharing. Borrowing from prior work in which role sharing has been discussed, this study presents hypotheses and findings from analysis of field survey data collected from employees in healthcare organizations.

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Leadership

Bass (1985) presents a new paradigm of leadership in proposing a continuum of leadership styles. Extending Burns (1978), Bass (1985) proposes distinct leader behaviors that range from transactional to transformational styles of leadership, arguing that leaders who enact transformational behaviors increase their followers' motivations, which, in turn, yield better follower performance. Among the most frequently researched theories in the past two decades (Judge and Piccolo, 2004), charismatic and transformational leadership theories have been linked with many positive organizational outcomes (Avolio *et al.*, 2009; Hetland *et al.*, 2007; Keller, 2006). Other contributions include identification of numerous behaviors associated with good leaders (see, for example, Bass, 1990b; Bennis and Nanus, 1988; Kouzes and Posner, 2002a). One of the great contributions of transformational leadership research is the development of measurements of leadership behaviors.

While leadership theories generally focus on leaders, as well as their effects on followers and organizational outcomes, some theories have even taken leaders out of the performance equation entirely. For example, in substitutes for leaders theories, formal leaders lose importance when subordinates are well-trained, experienced, and/or performing professional work, when the work tasks provide intrinsic satisfaction to the subordinates, or when the subordinates form a cohesive work group (Kerr and Jermier, 1978). Subsequent substitutes for leadership research examines the impact of autonomous teams and strong-minded individuals who could enact leader roles when needed (Bass, 1990a). In a similar vein, the idea that a strong team or its individual members with requisite competencies could replace the need for leadership is viewed as a promising area of research that calls for further study of how transformational teams and organizations can improve the transformational leadership behaviors of "appointed, elected, or emergent individual leaders" (Bass and Riggio, 2006: 222). Is it not logical, then, to think that effective followers can emerge as leaders to fill the leader role and execute the responsibilities of leadership, even if only temporarily?

Followership

Just as Hollander (1974) draws a distinction between the leader role and the leadership process, so too do followership scholars draw a distinction between the follower role and the followership process. A follower is defined as an active, participative role in which a person willingly supports the teachings or views of a leader and consciously and deliberately works towards goals held in common with the leader and/or organization (Baker and Gerlowski, 2007). The study of followership is grounded on four key premises: (1) followers are active, not passive, (2) followers and leaders are roles, not genetic dispositions, (3) followers and leaders share a common purpose, and (4) the follower-leader relationship is an interdependent one (Baker, 2007).

Leaders and Followers Are Interdependent

Early leadership theorists generally focused on leaders, including why, how, and the extent to which leaders influenced subordinates. Many leadership studies "separate

'leaders' from 'followers' and privilege the former as the primary agents in these dynamics" (Collinson, 2005: 1420). Some considered the distinct leader and follower positions to have a symbiotic relationship (Allio, 2007; Burns, 1978; Kelley, 1992; Sevier, 1999). In contrast, early followership theorists asserted that the leader-follower relationship was an interdependent one with a mutual influence process and should be studied in entirety rather than as separate entities of leader and follower (Heller and Van Til, 1982; Hollander, 1992; Hollander and Webb, 1955). Regardless of the leadership model, followers were seen as contributors to the influence process (Clements and Washbush, 1999).

Other followership theorists in the 1990s furthered this idea, positing that leaders and followers formed effective partnerships in which both follower and leader were individually and collectively responsible for the actions of the organization and that both roles had equal weight (Kelley, 1991; Potter *et al.*, 1996). Reviewing and rethinking the role of follower can advance the knowledge of organizations (Kelley, 2008). This study accepts the premises that leaders and followers are inherently interdependent in a common process (Rost, 1993) and that followers seek to collaborate with leaders in pursuit of a meaningful purpose. This study, however, extends these ideas to a further possibility: that followers can and will assume leader-like roles themselves.

Leaders and Followers Share Roles

Attempts to understand leadership resulted in many typologies of leaders, and as early as 1948, scholars theorized different roles enacted by leaders (Bass, 1990a). However, a leader was expected to play a different role than the roles enacted by other members in a group (Bass, 1990a). For example, hierarchical organizations depend on leaders in formal authoritative roles to coordinate actions to achieve organizational goals (Vanderslice, 1988). The leader in those organizations is viewed as "holding" the formal authoritative position, and it and the role of leader become static and unchanging, contributing to an either-or perception of leader/non-leader (Hollander, 1974). But if the roles of leader and follower roles are viewed as flexible, rather than fixed, then a person can choose which role to play in different contexts and organizations (Heller and Van Til, 1982). Contextually, a flexible structure, for example, allows knowledge workers to play multiple roles, including both team leader and team member ("Interview with Rosabeth Moss Kanter," 2000). Research on high performance teams finds that followers and leaders often exchange roles (Hughes *et al.*, 1999).

The contrast between a leader's role expectations in different structural contexts or in organizations that are static or dynamic similarly may be extended to a follower's role expectations. Since a follower is a role filled by a person, it makes sense that the role may be enacted differently by different people in different contexts (Carsten *et al.*, 2010). A follower may play multiple active roles in the leadership process (Shamir, 2007) or in society (Kelley, 1991). A follower role may precede a leader role (Hollander and Offermann, 1990), or an individual may play both follower and leader roles (Chaleff, 2003; Hollander, 1974; Hurwitz and Hurwitz, 2009; Kelley, 1991), sometimes at "different times or in different contexts" (Bennis, 2008: 4), and

sometimes at the same time (Kellerman, 2008). From a purely practical point of view, it makes sense that any employee who is not at either the senior most or the lower most levels of the organization will occasionally need to shift in or out of the leader or the follower role to assume an alternative role.

Followers and leaders can be viewed as partners who move with ease from one role to another within the same group based on contextual factors such as task, interest, and expertise (Kelley, 1992), and who switch roles with each other to perform the role that best meets the organization's needs (Potter *et al.*, 1996). In a collaborative leader-follower relationship, the complementary strengths and weaknesses of leader and follower sometimes require the leader to follow and the follower to lead, shifting who is in the "up" position or "down" position (Berg, 1998: 50). Yet, some view the interactions in a leadership relationship as not only vertical, but also as horizontal, diagonal, and circular (Rost, 1993). Rost (1993) argues that anyone can be a leader and/or a follower. He also asserts that followers persuade both leaders and other followers, and that leaders and followers may occasionally change places (Rost, 1993).

A long-held fascination with leaders causes scholars to overlook followers or, if they think about them, to consider them homogenous (Hughes *et al.*, 1999). As long as one adheres to traditional stereotypes of omniscient leader and passive follower, one precludes the idea that followers may have the same – or some of the same – skills and characteristics as leaders. If one accepts that people may fill both the roles of leader and follower, i.e., that people may be leaders in one situation and followers in another, and that followers and leaders may exchange roles, one may also inquire about the factors that enable a person to fill both roles of leader and follower. Although leader and follower are separate roles that may have role-specific qualities (Hurwitz and Hurwitz, 2009), the roles have some attributes in common (Hollander, 1974, 1992; Hurwitz and Hurwitz, 2009; James, 1995; Lundin and Lancaster, 1990). Leader success and follower success have been attributed to the possession of the same qualities, such as courage, honesty, credibility, self-management, competence, commitment to the organization (Kelley, 1988), a willingness for both leader and follower to demonstrate flexibility and willingness to blend their own skills and traits with the other's (Sevier, 1999), and even joint participation in creating the organizational vision (Carsten and Bligh, 2008). Research has found support for similarities in characteristics of effective leaders and effective followers in a sample of military academy students (Tanoff and Barlow, 2002) and from the perspectives of senior level executives (Agho, 2009).

While it will be important to also study leaders' interest in behaving in follower-like ways, this paper examines the extent to which followers behave like leaders and thus have the ability to take on their roles. This research is not the first in this vein as the substitutes for leadership literature has also made this connection. However, it may be the first to do this from the perspective of the followership literature. By framing the research in the context of followership, this study draws on measurement approaches and methodological tools that offer new findings and that provide new promise for further research.

In summary, this study examines whether followers exhibit performance characteristics commonly attributed to leaders. This study also presents a model of

specific leader and follower behaviors that suggests that followers have the capabilities to share roles with leaders.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESES

Using the frameworks of exemplary leader practices, developed by Kouzes and Posner (2002a), and effective follower behaviors, developed by Pittman *et al.* (1998), this paper presents a theoretical model of performance behaviors that are associated with both leader and follower roles. Kouzes and Posner (2002a) find that exemplary leaders practice five behaviors: Challenging the Process, Enabling Others to Act, Inspiring a Shared Vision, Encouraging the Heart, and Modeling the Way. These behaviors can be grouped into two categories, one that concerns relationships and one that concerns performance. In the first category, the leader behaviors of modeling the way and encouraging the heart are focused on attributes that a leader uses to build and strengthen relationships with followers. Another characteristic, inspiring a shared vision, also concerns relationships because to practice it, a leader uses verbal and nonverbal expression, speaks from the heart and actively listens to followers as he/she appeals to shared aspirations (Kouzes and Posner, 2002a). In the second category, the leader behaviors of challenging the process and enabling others to act are focused on organizational challenges and outcomes, and a leader's actions are directed to helping followers maximize their performance as well as to achieve organizational goals. This study focuses on the performance-related behaviors of exemplary leaders, which may affect organizational outcomes.

Follower-centric theorists have proposed a list of characteristics said to be associated with the performance of effective followers. One common attribute offered across the literature is the characteristic of being adaptable to change. It is described as the ability to avoid role-boundedness (Lippitt, 1982), a willingness to be flexible and open to change (Carsten *et al.*, 2010; De Pree, 1992), having the versatility to handle ambiguity caused by change (Lundin and Lancaster, 1990), as well as being committed to continuous improvement (Potter *et al.*, 1996) and finding new ways to be effective (Pittman *et al.*, 1998).

Effective followers are also said to be competent in their jobs. This has been described as having technical skills (Gilbert and Hyde, 1988), keeping skills current (Hurwitz and Hurwitz, 2009), setting one's own high standards (Potter *et al.*, 1996), and being fully accountable for all of the details associated with one's tasks (Hurwitz and Hurwitz, 2009). Working well with others is another characteristic associated with effective followers. It is described as being positive about one's peers (Hurwitz and Hurwitz, 2009), having empathy with coworkers and understanding their jobs (Alcorn, 1992), working cooperatively and collaboratively with others (Carsten *et al.*, 2010; Sevier, 1999), engaging in win-win relationships rather than adversarial ones (Lippitt, 1982), and putting group success ahead of one's own (Potter and Rosenbach, 2006).

Pittman *et al.* (1998) find that effective followers demonstrate eight key behaviors, four of which are related to their job performance and four of which involve their relationships with others. This study uses three performance-related characteristics of effective followers identified by Pittman *et al.* (1998). The characteristics of Doing the Job, Working with Others, and Embracing Change demonstrate a follower's outward

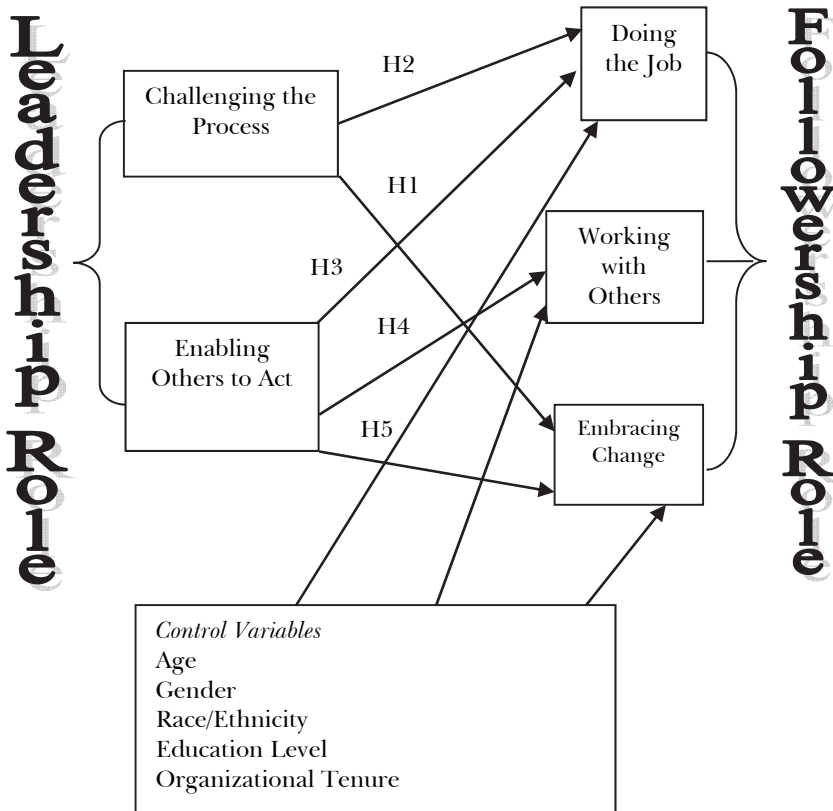
focus to leader, coworkers, and organization. As such, they are central to the enactment of effective leadership, in which leaders must harness the energies of followers to accomplish a common goal. Pittman *et al.*'s (1998) fourth performance characteristic, Self as a Resource, is excluded from the model used in this study. It is concerned primarily with a follower avoiding burnout by recognizing himself as a finite resource and recognizing that personal interests, such as family, community, nutrition, and physical fitness, must be balanced with work (Pittman *et al.*, 1998). As such, this characteristic is inner-focused and is not considered to be a core performance responsibility. It stands in contrast to the other three characteristics, which are outwardly focused and more directly related to leader, coworkers and organization.

The five leadership practices theorized by Kouzes and Posner (2002a) and the eight followership characteristics theorized by Pittman *et al.* (1998) suggest a complex leader-follower relationship that is worthy of research and further explanation. This study begins that examination by focusing on performance behaviors in followers that one would normally ascribe as belonging to leaders. This study examines the extent to which followers can exhibit these leader performance characteristics and whether they are significantly related to effective follower performance behaviors. As such, followers' practice of adopting leader-like behaviors may be a useful indicator of their ability to share the leader's role. Figure 1 models the relationships that are hypothesized to exist between the variables of interest in this study.

Effective Leaders and Effective Followers Are Engaged in Change

Change is inherent in organizational life and necessary if an organization is not to stagnate. Change presents opportunities that can motivate both leaders and followers to better performance. Effective change leaders are often viewed as those who assess external threats and opportunities and then present their assessment to followers (Yukl, 2006). Indeed, a leader's ability to facilitate his or her organization's adaptation to change may be the most important of all leader characteristics (Allio, 2007). But, successful organizational change cannot occur without followers who are willing to accept it and who are committed to its success (Bennis, 2006).

Figure 1
Model of Leader and Follower Performance
Characteristics that Support Role Sharing



Effective leaders do more than wait for challenges to arise: they search for and create opportunities to challenge their organizations to new successes (Kouzes and Posner, 2002a; Sashkin, 2006). Effective leaders seek meaningful changes for themselves as well as their followers (Kouzes and Posner, 2002a). In doing so, they present change ideas and plans in a way that connects with the follower's "values, ideals, and core competencies" (Yukl, 2006). Effective leaders not only encourage followers to accept new challenges (Sashkin, 2006), but they also deliberately set high standards to encourage employees to better their own best performances (Kouzes and Posner, 2002a). They encourage followers to question the status quo and to take initiative, regardless of their organizational role (Kouzes and Posner, 2002a).

Risk goes hand-in-hand with change and has long been a concern of effective leaders (see, for example, Bennis and Nanus, 1988). While a leader may experiment with change or even initiate change to challenge his/her organization and move it forward, he/she must be careful about the amount of risk involved and not ask more than the follower can accomplish (Sashkin, 2006). An effective leader takes small risks that add up to incremental successes. Effective leaders give people space to make mistakes (De Pree, 1992). Leaders encourage follower development when they view lack of success not as failure, but rather as a mistake from which one can learn (Bennis and Nanus, 1988). By creating a safe environment in which others may try out new ideas and then evaluate their outcomes, individuals and organizations are more likely to learn from their mistakes and to build on their successes (Kouzes and Posner, 2002a).

Resistance is a common response to change. Followers fear that they may lose power, valued relationships and rewards, or may be viewed by others as incompetent in a new situation (Hughes *et al.*, 1999). A leader's behaviors in initiating change and managing risk can set the tone for follower behaviors that contribute to subsequent success or failure. For example, when leaders engage followers in the creation of an organizational vision, followers will feel more empowered, have more clarity about the vision, and will be less stressed about organizational change (Carsten and Bligh, 2008).

Effective followers make a commitment to be open to change (De Pree, 1992) and approach change positively rather than resist it (Pitman *et al.*, 1998). They think beyond the constraints of their current roles, exhibiting flexibility and versatility (Lippett, 1982; Lundin and Lancaster, 1990) as they act independently in adapting to changes in their organizations and relationships (Alcorn, 1992). Effective followers are engaged in continuous improvement for themselves as well as their organizations. Followers are excited by discovering the unknown (Bass and Riggio, 2006), which drives them to consider new ideas and to try new methods that could improve their own performance (Pitman *et al.*, 1998). Followers who embrace change also serve as change agents who demonstrate the benefits of openness and adaptability to their co-workers (Pitman *et al.*, 1998).

Effective followers have a sense of responsibility for their own performance. They focus on performance that exceeds the minimum expectations (Potter and Rosenbach, 2006) and are responsible for achieving their own goals (De Pree, 1992). They derive personal satisfaction from their work because they set their own high standards and take pride in their accomplishments (Potter and Rosenbach, 2006).

To summarize, effective leaders challenge the process by encouraging others to challenge themselves to higher performance and to take initiative, regardless of their organizational role (Kouzes and Posner, 2002a). Effective leaders also create a safe environment in which others can try new ideas. Effective followers embrace change and do the job by searching for new ideas and experimenting with different job behaviors to improve themselves, as well as their organizations (Potter and Rosenbach, 2006). This literature review informs the formation of these hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: *Followers who report that they have the leader characteristic of challenging the process will be more likely to have the follower characteristic of embracing change.*

Hypothesis 2: *Followers who report that they have the leader characteristic of challenging the process will be more likely to have the follower characteristic of doing the job.*

Effective Leaders Set the Stage for Effective Followers

Leaders who are effective set the stage so that their followers can contribute to the organization's success. Effective leaders improve their followers' effectiveness by helping followers improve their own performance, by helping followers improve their peer relationships, and by helping followers adapt to organizational change.

Effective leaders strengthen their followers by developing their self-confidence and by designing roles that allow them to make unique contributions to the end product (Kouzes and Posner, 2002a). Good leaders keep the organization's objectives forefront and decide how to use their followers and other resources to achieve those objectives (Collins, 2001). They allocate resources and decision-making authority to followers (Kouzes and Posner, 2002a). If a leader has a high assessment of a follower's abilities, he/she can more quickly share responsibilities and delegate authority to the follower, increasing the likelihood of the follower's buy-in to his/her tasks (Zhu *et al.*, 2009) and to the organization. Ultimately, a leader's sharing of his/her own power helps to develop self-leadership in followers, which strengthens their performance (Kouzes and Posner, 2002a; Rosenbach and Taylor, 2006).

Through expression of a compelling vision, effective leaders stimulate followers to high performance (Collins, 2001), even performance beyond expectations (Rosenbach and Taylor, 2006). Leaders are likely to get better follower performance by asserting higher, rather than lower, expectations of their followers (Zhu *et al.*, 2009), which helps followers to raise their own performance standards. Providing coaching and training helps develop follower competence and self-confidence (Kouzes and Posner, 2002a), as does mentoring (de Janasz *et al.*, 2003). All of these actions place leaders in a role of enabling their followers to act.

Followers want to feel significant and to be recognized for their contributions (Bennis, 2006; Goffee and Jones, 2006). Doing their jobs well means that effective followers improve their performance to exceed minimum expectations (Potter and Rosenbach, 2006). Because they are challenging themselves and setting their own high standards, they derive personal satisfaction from their work and are proud of what they do (Potter and Rosenbach, 2006). Their self-perceptions of their own

characteristics have a positive effect on their work engagement (Zhu *et al.*, 2009). In contrast, followers who are not effective simply go through the motions to meet minimum standards and do not extend themselves to do more than what is necessary to keep their jobs (Potter and Rosenbach, 2006).

Hypothesis 3: *Followers who report that they have the leader characteristic of enabling others to act will be more likely to have the follower characteristic of doing the job.*

Today's society is complex and technologically advanced, requiring the talents of many people to successfully accomplish critical projects (Bennis, 2006). An organization succeeds only when its members work together (Sashkin, 2006). Effective leaders help followers improve peer relationships and develop a sense of teamwork in several ways. Good leaders collaborate with their followers (Allio, 2007) and act as their allies (Bennis, 2006). They motivate follower performance and foster collaboration in their followers by promoting shared goals (Bass and Riggio, 2006; Kouzes and Posner, 2002a). Collaboration is developed as individuals realize that the work of all members is needed to achieve a successful end result. Leaders facilitate this process by emphasizing "we" rather than "I," by sharing information and resources, and by linking others to sources of power (Kouzes and Posner, 2002a). These leader behaviors demonstrate a leader's ability to enable others to act.

Followers want to be part of a community and to connect with co-workers in addition to the leader (Goffee and Jones, 2006). Effective followers identify and work with co-workers to achieve common goals rather than pursue individual goals and self-interest. They encourage co-workers to participate and to respect each other (Kelley, 1992). They work collectively rather than independently. These followers value group success and understand the value of collaborating rather than competing (Pitman *et al.*, 1998), resulting in the ability of working with others.

Hypothesis 4: *Followers who report that they have the leader characteristic of enabling others to act will be more likely to have the follower characteristic of working with others.*

Effective leaders use their power and influence to achieve positive outcomes (Sashkin, 2006). As a by-product of strengthening their followers' individual performances and building their followers' collaborative skills, effective leaders help followers to be open to change and to act as change agents. Having change agents positioned throughout the organization enables implementation of strategic initiatives in the organization, and effective leaders empower follower/change agents (Yukl, 2006). Effective leaders have ensured that followers have the skills, resources, and knowledge needed to succeed in their responsibilities (Sashkin, 2006), which promotes follower self-confidence and enables followers to act.

Once a leader has demonstrated organizational loyalty and competency, followers will give the leader more leeway to initiate changes (Goffee and Jones, 2006). Effective followers can accept some degree of ambiguity and uncertainty (Goffee and Jones, 2006), and they approach change positively rather than resisting it (Pitman *et al.*,

1998). Effective followers are engaged in continuous improvement for themselves as well as their organizations, which drives them to consider new ideas and to try new methods that could improve their own performance (Pitman *et al.*, 1998). Being open to change allows followers to set an example of openness and loyalty for their coworkers (Pitman *et al.*, 1998) as they demonstrate how to embrace change.

***Hypothesis 5:** Followers who have the leader characteristic of enabling others to act will be more likely to have the follower characteristic of embracing change.*

METHODS

Sample and Procedures

In order to examine the hypotheses for this study, a sample was drawn from individuals who worked in the healthcare industry. Recognizing that employees often play multiple roles in an organization (Chaleff, 2003; Hollander, 1974; Kellerman, 2008), the study collected data from individuals in organizationally-designated follower roles about their own leadership and followership abilities. To recruit study participants, the researcher used a combination of personal and mail survey techniques called the drop-off method (Salant and Dillman, 1994). Because anonymity was promised to respondents, letters and survey packets were addressed to organizational teams rather than to individuals. Data were collected over an average of six weeks at each site using these contacts: (1) a recruiting flyer posted in the team's common area; (2) a pre-survey letter that followed one to two weeks after posting of the recruiting letter; (3) a data collection packet, distributed one week after the pre-survey letter, which included a cover letter, the survey questionnaire, an Information Sheet in lieu of a certificate of informed consent, and a privacy envelope addressed to the researcher in which to return the survey to the drop-off box; and (4) a reminder flyer that was posted by the organization five to eight days after distribution of the data packets. If response rate was low at the end of the data collection period, the researcher distributed a new set of data collection packets to the sample.

After data collection was completed at each site, surveys were reviewed according to criteria provided by the authors of the survey measures. Using the screening criteria, a survey response was eliminated if (a) the respondent marked the same response to all items on either instrument or (b) ten percent (four or more) of the items were left blank on either instrument. Some surveys that were retained for this study had missing data. For the surveys with items that were left blank, one of the most widely used methods, mean substitution, was utilized to replace the missing data of the variable with the mean of that variable calculated from all completed responses (Hair *et al.*, 2010).

A total sample of 493 healthcare workers, representing four organizations located at six sites in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States, was recruited for the study. Respondents were paid employees of their organizations. Of the 493 recruited, 212 individuals responded. Using the screening criteria, surveys from twelve respondents were eliminated from the study, leaving 200 respondents, resulting in a 40.6% response rate.

The average age of respondents was 42.36 years, and they had been employed with their organization for 82.17 months (or approximately seven years). Approximately 75 percent of respondents were female. Sixty-one percent of respondents were white, 20.5 percent were African-American, six percent were Asian, 2.5 percent were Latino/Hispanic, 4.5 percent were other, and 5.5 percent did not supply this information. In the sample, the highest educational degree obtained included: 3.5 percent, doctoral or professional degree; 10 percent, master's degree; 22.5 percent, bachelor's degree; 9.5 percent, nursing diploma program graduate; 13.5 percent, associate's degree; and 38 percent, high school or GED diploma.

Table 1
Means, Standard Deviations, and Zero-Order Correlations for Model of
Leader and Follower Performance Characteristics that Support Role Sharing^a

VAR ^b	OT	GEN	EDU	RACE	AGE	CP	EOA	EC	DJ	WO
GEN	0.11									
EDU	0.10	-0.08								
RACE	0.23	0.07	0.00							
AGE	0.42	0.12	0.05	0.09						
CP	0.00	-0.13	0.19	-0.01	0.01					
EOA	0.02	-0.02	0.18	-0.03	-0.08	0.59				
EC	0.00	-0.09	0.15	-0.04	-0.02	0.63	0.46			
DJ	0.04	-0.05	0.14	-0.01	0.07	0.47	0.37	0.49		
WO	0.09	0.03	0.13	-0.01	-0.02	0.28	0.43	0.42	0.46	
Mean	82.17	1.78	3.60	4.68	42.36	6.66	7.86	3.55	3.94	4.02
S.D.	79.32	0.41	1.63	2.24	13.34	1.69	1.29	0.75	0.61	0.51
α						0.80	0.64	0.69	0.59	0.53
CR						0.80	0.64	0.70	0.59	0.56
H						0.82	0.67	0.70	0.61	0.59

Note: VAR = Variables; OT = Organizational Tenure in Months; GEN = Gender; RACE = race/ethnicity; CP = Challenging the Process; EOA = Enabling Others to Act; EC = Embracing Change; DJ = Doing the Job; WO = Working with Others; α = Cronbach alpha; CR = Construct Reliability; H = Coefficient H.

^a n = 200. Correlations with absolute values of 0.15 or greater are significant at the $p < 0.05$ level or better.

^bCoding was as follows: Gender: 1 = "Male," 2 = "Female;" Education: 1 = "GED," 2 = "High School," 3 = "Associate's Degree," 4 = "Nursing Diploma Program Graduate," 5 = Bachelor's Degree," 6 = "Master's Degree," 7 = "Doctoral/Professional Degree;" Race/Ethnicity: 1 = "African American," 2 = "Asian," 3 = "Bi-racial," 4 = "Caribbean American," 5 = "Latino/Hispanic," 6 = "White," 7 = "American Indian/Alaska Native," 8 = "Asian American/Pacific Islander."

Measures

Nunnally (1978) suggests that internal reliability should be greater than 0.70. As described by Hair *et al.* (2010), Robinson *et al.* (1991) argue that while 0.70 is desirable, 0.60 or higher is acceptable for exploratory studies. Given the exploratory nature of this study, all variables except one had acceptable reliabilities > 0.60 , as advised by Gall *et al.* (1999) and Robinson *et al.* (1991). For this study, three forms of reliability are provided in Table 1 (i.e., construct reliability, Hair *et al.*, 2010; coefficient H [maximal reliability], Hancock and Mueller, 2001; and cronbach alpha, Nunnally, 1978). Variables included were Challenging the Process, Enabling Others to Act, Embracing Change, Doing the Job, and Working with Others.

Leadership Dimensions. The two leadership dimensions investigated in this study, Challenging the Process and Enabling Others to Act, were measured by the Leadership Practices Inventory-Self (LPI) (Kouzes and Posner, 2003). The LPI is a survey instrument that measures respondents' attitudes about their own leadership behaviors. Using a 10-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = *almost never* to 10 = *almost always*, each of the two behaviors of exemplary leaders were measured by six items, resulting in twelve items. Reliability and validity about the LPI have been published (Kouzes and Posner, 2002b).

Followership Dimensions. Given the very small body of followership research and the limited analysis of published followership scales, this study utilizes an exploratory scale, the Performance and Relationship Questionnaire (PRQ) (Rosenbach *et al.*, 1997). The PRQ measures respondents' attitudes about their own followership behaviors. For this study, three followership dimensions were investigated: Embracing Change, Doing the Job, and Working with Others. Each was measured by four items, using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = *almost never* to 5 = *always*, resulting in twelve items.

Although the reliability for one of the followership performance characteristics (i.e., Working with Others $\alpha = 0.585$) was low, a confirmatory factor analysis revealed that each item used to measure the variable was statistically significant, and thus the variable was deemed acceptable for research purposes and included in the path analysis (Hair *et al.*, 2010).

Control Variables. This study controls for age, gender, race/ethnicity, highest degree completed in education, and organizational tenure in months. In prior research (Boatwright and Forrest, 2000; Neil and Kirby, 1985; Stinson and Robertson, 1973), age and education (highest degree of completion) have been shown to influence followers' preferences for leadership behaviors, therefore suggesting that these demographic variables may also influence followership behaviors. Because organizational tenure has previously been shown to influence followers' behavior (Blanchard *et al.*, 2009), a control variable for organizational tenure in months is used. In addition, organizational tenure and gender are considered important control variables in the leadership literature (Eagly and Johnson, 1990), which lends support for their importance in the followership literature. Race/ethnicity may influence the working relationship issues of an inclusive workforce (Huber, 2006). Therefore, it is suggested that all

of these demographic variables may account for some variance in predicting the following variables: Embracing Change, Doing the Job, and Working with Others.

Analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis was performed in order to provide support for the issues of dimensionality and convergent validity (Anderson and Gerbing, 1988) and to evaluate the factor structure of leadership and followership. Measures of fit of two plausible alternative models were compared. In particular, the fit of a hypothesized five-factor model was compared to a two-factor model (leadership and followership items loaded on their construct).

In order to examine the model fit, absolute fit, incremental fit, and parsimonious fit were utilized to determine how well the data fit the hypothesized model (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Only theoretically sensible modification indices were integrated and applied incrementally with χ^2 analyses signifying substantial improvements at each step (Byrne, 2001). Based upon the results of the CFA, conceptually sound improvements for measurement purification were made as guided by the modification indices; therefore, one item from both Enabling Others to Act and Embracing Change was deleted from further analysis. The results of the CFA demonstrated a moderate fit of the five-factor model to the data on the basis of a number of fit statistics [$\chi^2(199, n = 200) = 304.48, p < 0.001$; normed $\chi^2 = 1.530$; GFI = 0.876; CFI = 0.902; TLI = 0.886; RMSEA = 0.052]. Model fit statistics provide support for convergent validity.

Next, the fit of a hypothesized five-factor model was compared to the two-factor model of leadership and followership. The chi-square difference test revealed that the hypothesized five-factor model fit the data significantly better than the two-factor model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 36.86, df = 4, n = 200, p < 0.001$). The hypothesized five-factor model fit better than the one alternative model, and the fit indices and the root mean square error of approximation were indicative of an acceptable model (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Table 2 presents the results of the confirmatory factory analysis.

RESULTS

There was a significant correlation between the study variables and the control variable of education, indicating that respondents with higher levels of education report that they perform better in the followership performance characteristic of Embracing Change ($r = 0.151, p < 0.05$), as well as in the leadership performance characteristics of Encouraging Others to Act ($r = 0.181, p < 0.01$) and Challenging the Process ($r = 0.189, p < 0.01$). Although there were statistically significant correlations among control variables, specifically tenure in organization with race/ethnicity and age, these were not of practical significance in the study.

Table 2
Results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Model	χ^2	df	$\frac{\chi^2}{df}$	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	Model Comp.	χ^2 diff.	df diff.	$p <$
Null model	1302.02	231								
Two-factor model (L-F)	341.34	203	1.68	0.87	0.85	0.06	2 & 5	36.86	4	0.001
Five-factor model	304.48	199	1.53	0.90	0.89	0.05				

Note. CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; diff. = difference; L = Leadership; F = Followership
 $n = 200$

Table 3
Path Analysis Results (Based on AMOS Standardized Regression Weights)

Direct Effect Hypothesis and Path Direction	Standardized Coefficient (β)	SE	t-value	Conclusion
H ₁ : Challenging the Process → Embracing Change	0.121***	0.015	8.337	Supported
H ₂ : Challenging the Process → Doing the Job	0.089***	0.017	5.126	Supported
H ₃ : Enabling Others to Act → Doing the Job	0.055 ⁺	0.029	1.914	Marginal Supported
H ₄ : Enabling Others to Act → Working with Others	0.132***	0.021	6.450	Supported
H ₅ : Enabling Others to Act → Embracing Change	0.045 ⁺	0.024	1.930	Marginal Supported

Note. n = 200

*p < 0.10; **p < 0.05; ***p < 0.01; ****p < 0.001.

Model Fit

The research hypotheses were tested using the analysis of moment structures (AMOS) computer program (Arbuckle and Wothke, 1995) through path analysis. According to the results of the path analysis, the research model fits the data well [$\chi^2(1, n = 200) = 0.271, p = 0.603$; GFI = 1.000; CFI = 1.000; TLI = 1.087; NFI = 0.999; RMSEA = 0.000]. All five hypotheses were supported.

After controlling for the demographic variables, the analyses indicated that the first leadership characteristic, Challenging the Process, ($\beta = 0.121, p < 0.001$), was positively related to Embracing Change (Hypothesis 1). In addition, Challenging the Process ($\beta = 0.089, p < 0.001$) was positively associated with Doing the Job (Hypothesis 2). Pertaining to the second leadership characteristic that was analyzed in this study, Enabling Others to Act was positively associated with Doing the Job ($\beta = 0.055, p < 0.10$; Hypothesis 3, marginal support), Working with Others ($\beta = 0.132, p < 0.001$; Hypothesis 4), and Embracing Change ($\beta = 0.045, p < 0.10$; Hypothesis 5, marginal support). Even though all five hypotheses were supported, it is imperative to note that two of the five hypotheses are marginally supported (i.e., Hypotheses 3 and 5) and should be interpreted with caution. Table 3 provides a summary of the results.

The squared multiple correlations (SMC) for the followership characteristics, Embracing Change, Doing the Job, and Working with Others were 0.409, 0.237, and 0.197, respectively. In structural equation modeling, the SMC is roughly equivalent to the R-squared coefficient in regression models (Arbuckle and Wothke, 1995).

DISCUSSION

Support for three of the hypotheses and marginal support for the remaining two hypotheses demonstrate that in the process of being a good follower, followers in the sample also appear to share characteristics common to good leaders. Thus, these findings suggest that there may be an overlap between leader and follower role adoption. In this sample, support for the hypotheses indicates that followers – via their self-reported survey responses – see themselves as possessing both exemplary leader and effective follower characteristics. More specifically, the particular characteristics are associated with leaders' abilities to evoke positive followers' responses and with followers' abilities to respond positively to leaders' stimuli, thus improving follower performance. In this study, followers' self-identification of their leader-like abilities to challenge the process and enable others to act are associated with effective follower behaviors of embracing change, doing the job, and working with others. These characteristics are important in a dynamic work environment in which change is constant. The competencies of those formally designated leaders in hierarchical organizations are only strengthened when those in follower roles are able to step up and demonstrate the same behaviors.

This study proposed hypotheses and tested a model of leader-follower performance characteristics and found that specific leader behaviors are positively associated with desired characteristics that one would hope to find in effective followers; in particular, these include embracing change, doing the job, and working with others.

This is thought to be one of the first empirical studies that explores the notion of role-sharing in and by followers. In focusing on followers' performance characteristics, these findings are important to the overall ability to understand followership and to understand the ability of followers to step in to leader roles, even temporarily. These findings lend support to the idea that followers prepare for leader roles by being effective followers. This research has provided empirical support for the idea that effective followers demonstrate exemplary leader behaviors, which can facilitate their adoption of leader-like roles.

Limitations

The study was delimited to healthcare organizations in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. Sample respondents were employed by those organizations. Thus, the findings from this study may be culturally bound and not generalizable to other global cultures or occupational settings. This study utilized data collected via self-report measures, which may lead to the problem of common method bias and inflated predictive relationships (Campbell and Fiske, 1959). However, due to the perceptual nature of this study, survey methodology was appropriate, as Crompton and Wagner (1994) argued in their review on the validity of self-report methods that research has failed to demonstrate proof of meaningful inflation with self-reported measures. In addition, this study was based on cross-sectional data and, therefore, issues of causality cannot be inferred or suggested. Finally, the conceptualization of Working with Others yielded a Coefficient H of 0.585, which was below the 0.60 level of acceptability for an exploratory study (Hair *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, conclusions drawn regarding Working with Others should be interpreted with caution until further replication of these findings.

Research Agenda

Future research should continue to explore the extent to which leader and follower behaviors are related. It would be interesting to further explore the extent to which followers are said to prepare for leadership by virtue of being especially effective followers. That is, perhaps great followers emerge later as great leaders, in the spirit of prior work that has explored conditions under which leaders emerge, including in unique situations, e.g., crises (Hollander, 1974; Pillai, 1996; Shamir and Howell, 1999).

In addition, it would be a natural extension of the current work to explore the notion that great followers contribute to the effectiveness of their leaders. Further, theoretical knowledge of the ways in which both leaders and followers enact multiple roles and exchange roles in organizational settings would be valuable. That leaders are sometimes followers and followers are sometimes leaders is not a new notion (Hughes *et al.*, 1999; "Interview with Rosabeth Moss Kanter," 2000) but it has seen limited research attention. Further study will be conducted to learn more about the conditions under which followers feel at liberty to switch out of their formal roles to support leaders in ways that are sanctioned by both the leader and the organization.

Further study of the relationship characteristics exhibited by followers and leaders alike would also seem like a logical next step in this research stream. While these variables are omitted from consideration in the current study, they should be explored in the future. Lastly, organizational outcomes such as productivity, job satisfaction, and organizational citizenship behaviors may be associated with effective followers and successful leader-follower relationships. Exploration of these measures would seem fruitful in advancing our understanding of organizational success.

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