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Most Admired Leader/Most Admired Follower

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In introducing concepts of leadership and followership to students, this experiential exercise highlights qualities associated with the leader and follower roles. Various learning objectives guide the development of the exercise. They focus on identification of behavioral qualities possessed by both leaders and followers and on the importance of the leader-follower relationship to the organization's achievement of goals. Theoretical underpinnings are stressed throughout. In the exercise, students individually develop a list of characteristics associated with their own most admired leader or follower and then share their lists in small groups. In plenary discussion, groups share all characteristics identified, and the instructor leads discussion to achieve stated learning objectives. Exercise handouts, instructions for facilitating classroom discussion, and a summary of theories that may be used as a postexercise student handout are provided. *Organization Management Journal*, 12: 23–33, 2015. doi: 10.1080/15416518.2014.969366

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The study of leadership has flourished for more than a century and shows no sign of abating. Researchers today continue to propose ideas and to collect data to develop and support new theories about leaders' attributes and effectiveness (Dinh et al., 2014; Yukl, 2012). Leaders have long been lauded for an organization's successes and pilloried for its failures due to the centrality of the roles they play in organizations (Meindl & Ehrlich, 1987; Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985). Some of this emphasis on leaders results from an attempt to simplify the complexities and make sense of organizational outcomes by relying on a common understanding of one term—"leadership" (Bligh, Kohles, & Pillai, 2011). There are also strong forces driving us to consider followers' perspectives in the full leadership equation. In this exercise we introduce learners to another component of the leadership process by schooling them on

the fundamentals of followership. In doing so, we introduce theoretical underpinnings that guide students in better understanding the origins of leadership and followership theories, what their roots are, and ways in which they may be compared and contrasted.¹

THE IMPORTANCE OF FOLLOWERSHIP

Historically, our long-held fascination with leaders caused us to overlook the people they led (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009; Baker, 2007; Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, & McGregor, 2010; Hall & Lord, 1995; Oc & Bashur, 2013), or, if we thought about them, to regard them as "nonleaders . . . an essentially passive residual category" (Hollander, 1974, p. 21). Leadership research largely examined those in positions of power (i.e., individuals who are typically identified as leaders), who use their position of power to direct subordinates in task performance to achieve organizational outcomes (Shamir, 2007; Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carsten, 2014). In the past 35 years, however, researchers have begun to study more closely those being led, whom we call followers, and to recognize that followers affect leaders, and, in turn, that their relationship with leaders affects organizational outcomes. We discuss cognitive and role-based theories to set the stage for the experiential exercise presented herein.

WHAT—OR WHO—MAKES A LEADER?

As researchers turned from investigating traits and qualities that a leader possesses, they began to investigate how followers affect leaders and the leadership process. Lines of research investigated what followers think about leaders as well as the interdependence of the leader-follower relationship. Research about cognitive and perceptual processes led to theories about followers' implicit views of leaders. There are several models of implicit leadership theories (ILTs), but the model perhaps most applicable to leadership in organizational settings is presented by Lord and associates (Epitropaki, Sy, Martin, Tram-Quon, & Topakas, 2013).

The model developed by Lord and associates (Hall & Lord, 1995; Lord, 1985; Lord, Brown, Harvey, & Hall, 2001; Lord,

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Foti, & De Vader, 1984; Lord & Maher, 1993) helps us to better understand what separates leaders from nonleaders (Offermann, Kennedy, & Wirtz, 1994; Schyns & Schilling, 2011). It is informed by cognitive categorization theory (Mervis & Rosch, 1981; Rosch, Mervis, Gray, Johnson, & Boyes-Braem, 1976). The essence of the model is that individuals form mental prototypes, or implicit theories, of ideal leaders based on their direct observations of leader behaviors (Rush, Thomas, & Lord, 1977), their own socialization, and their past experiences (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004). The perceivers, or followers, encode these experiences in memory (Rush et al., 1977) and recall them at later times when interacting with a stimulus person, such as their supervisor. If the stimulus person's qualities match a follower's prototype, or ILT, that person may be recognized as a leader by the perceiver (Lord & Emrich, 2001). Although prototypes were first thought to be fixed and stable over time, scholars recognized that long-term memories may blur over time and that current situational context may also affect what were thought to be fixed implicit theories (Shondrick & Lord, 2010); thus, researchers began to study the dynamic nature of interactions between leaders and followers.

Leadership and Followership as Interdependent Processes

In the 1990s, several research streams explored leadership as an interdependent process whose success relies on sound relationships with followers. Hollander and associates viewed leadership as a relational influence process between a person who fills the leader role and others who fill the role(s) of follower(s); all actively work together over time to achieve mutual goals (Hollander, 1992; Hollander & Julian, 1969; Hollander & Offermann, 1990). Building on the idea of follower and leader roles, in another approach, followership scholars searched for qualities and behaviors associated with effective followers and role performance (Chaleff, 1995; Kelley, 1988, 1992; Potter, III, Rosenbach, & Pittman, 1996). From a cognitive framework, some ILT scholars proposed that integrating the psychological literature about self-concepts with the leadership literature would improve understanding of the interactions between followers and leaders and the ways in which they mutually influence each other (Lord, Brown, & Freiberg, 1999). In this stream, both leaders and followers were thought to use their implicit theories to assess each other's behaviors and to guide their reactions to and interactions with one another (Shondrick & Lord, 2010).

Another research stream investigated the content of ILTs and characteristics that people associate with leaders. Offermann et al. (1994) identified eight factors, or traits, associated with people's implicit view of leadership and found that the respondents generally had a positive view of leaders, effective leaders, and supervisors. The authors noted that some of the factors, such as sensitivity and charisma, were similar to those that the leadership literature identified as desirable for leaders. Knowing the qualities that followers find desirable helps

leaders shape the image that they need to adopt to gain follower acceptance (Lord & Emrich, 2001).

Yet another stream of exploration focuses on partnerships that develop between leaders and followers. Leaders and followers who can work together as partners serve to benefit contemporary organizations (Rosenbach, Pittman, & Potter, III, 2012). In partner relationships, follower initiatives are as important as leader initiatives (Rosenbach et al., 2012). Some researchers assert that effective followers are as important as effective leaders in achieving organizational outcomes, including both group and organizational goals (Agho, 2009; Howell & Mendez, 2008). Still others believe that effective followership is as important as, or even more important than, effective leadership in achieving organizational success (Graham, 1988; Kelley, 1992; Tanoff & Barlow, 2002).

If we accept that leaders and followers have an interdependent relationship, then, logically, holding industry dynamics aside, it follows that we may no longer be able to attribute success or failure of organizational endeavors to leaders alone. The bottom line is, as we introduce our students to the concept of leadership, it is no longer sufficient to discuss only leaders and the qualities associated with effective leadership.

NEW THEORETICAL DIRECTIONS IN FOLLOWERSHIP

In the evolution of followership theory, new research streams have developed that offer promise to broaden our understanding of the leadership process. Although greater scholarly attention is now focused on followers than in earlier periods (Oc & Bashur, 2013; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014), there is still little empirical research that explores the outcomes of followers' efforts. Prior research has revealed evidence that senior leaders recognize followers for influencing work performance, work quality, work group cohesiveness, worker satisfaction and morale (Agho, 2009). Additional research streams have examined follower characteristics (Antelo, Prilipko, & Sheridan-Pereira, 2010; Baker, Mathis, & Stites-Doe, 2011; Carsten et al., 2010; Prilipko, Antelo, & Henderson, 2011), follower roles (Carsten et al., 2010; Danielsson, 2013), followers in teams (Baker & Gerlowski, 2007), and followers' ethical behavior (Carsten & Uhl-Bien, 2013).

More recently, cognitive research has investigated implicit follower theories (IFTs), which are defined as one's personal assumptions about the qualities and traits of followers (Sy, 2010). As with ILTs, people form IFTs through socialization and through experiences with followers (Sy, 2010). This line of research helps us to understand how leaders' implicit theories affect their assessment of and actions toward their followers (Sy, 2010; Whitely, Sy, & Johnson, 2012).

Research in cognitive streams and in behavioral role-based streams shows some similarities. Carsten et al. (2010) found that followers see themselves as portraying Passive, Active, or Proactive roles, each of which has distinct characteristics

associated with each role. Characteristics identified by Carsten et al. are similar to those associated with and validated in IFT research (Epitropaki et al., 2013). Epitropaki et al. summarized research about leaders' IFTs and transformational leadership by noting that leaders' IFTs affected their leadership style and that their positive perceptions of followers were more likely to result in their own increased demonstration of transformational leadership behaviors. Models of transformational leadership (see, e.g., Bass, 1990; Bennis & Nanus, 1988; Kouzes & Posner, 2002) typically recognize affective aspects between leaders and followers, such as inspirational communication, shared vision and values, intellectual challenges, and a leader's attention to the follower's feelings, which earlier models of leadership did not (Avolio et al., 2009). Over the past few decades, transformational leadership has been extensively researched (Avolio et al., 2009; Dinh et al., 2014; Judge & Piccolo, 2004) and, among other outcomes, has been shown to improve follower motivation and performance (Yukl, 2008), as well as organizational outcomes, including performance, satisfaction, and commitment (Pillai, Kohles, & Bligh, 2007). For these reasons, we use a model of transformational leadership in this exercise.

THE MOST ADMIRABLE LEADER/MOST ADMIRABLE FOLLOWER EXERCISE

This experiential exercise was adapted for an introductory lower level undergraduate leadership course that introduces business students to leadership, business concepts, and career development. The primary purpose of this exercise is to introduce students to the concepts of leadership and followership and to assist them with understanding the characteristics and attributes of effective leaders and followers, something that is often minimized in our management classes (Sronce & Arendt, 2009). The four learning objectives are:

1. To introduce students to the concepts of leadership and followership.
2. To compare and contrast leader and follower behavioral attributes.
3. To enhance students' recognition of attributes that contribute to effective leaders and followers.
4. To explore the interdependent nature of the leader-follower relationship.

Theoretical Base for This Exercise

The Most Admired Leader/Most Admired Follower exercise is designed to introduce students to the tenets of transformational leadership (Kouzes & Posner, 2012) and to principles of effective followership (Rosenbach et al., 2012). These models highlight behavioral qualities associated with good leadership and good followership, respectively. As noted earlier, transformational leadership has been linked with many positive organizational outcomes (Avolio et al., 2009; Bass,

1990). The Kouzes and Posner (2012) model is built on five behaviors, or practices: model the way, inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act, and encourage the heart. We use this model because its five practices capture the affective aspects of transformational leadership and offer the benefit of being both concise and parsimonious.

Models of followership (Kelley, 1992; Rosenbach et al., 2012) have proposed the active engagement of followers in the leadership process. The Rosenbach et al. model describes follower initiatives along two dimensions: (1) performance, which consists of doing the job, working with others, embracing change, and using self as a resource, and (2) relationship with the leader, which consists of identifying with the leader, building trust, courageous communication, and negotiating differences. We use the Rosenbach et al. model because it emphasizes relationship qualities in conjunction with performance.

In discussing followership, the exercise encourages students to explore the foundational themes found in the followership literature (Baker, 2007):

1. Followers and leaders are roles, not people who fill them. Leader and follower abilities are not genetically inborn but are skills that can be learned.
2. The term "follower" is a positive concept, not a negative one. Followers are not nonleaders (Hollander, 1974), and are not passive and sheep-like (Kelley, 1988). This was a long-held view of followers throughout much of the 20th century. More recently, scholars and practitioners alike have embraced the view that followers can take initiative and be proactive in working toward organizational goals.
3. Followers and leaders have a common purpose of shared organizational goals.
4. The follower and leader roles are of equal weight. This theme suggests that leaders alone are not responsible for success or failure of organizational goals. Some view the follower as having a supporting role to help the leader, while others view the follower as equally sharing responsibilities for goal achievement (Rosenbach et al., 2012).
5. Leaders, at times, are also followers; this sort of role reversal could occur several times a day (Baker et al., 2011). For example, a team of workers could have a designated leader and be composed of members with varying skill sets. During different phases of executing a task, the team member most skilled in a particular phase of the task may step forward to lead the group during that part of the task while the leader willingly steps back. When that phase is completed, the team member relinquishes the lead to the leader. This process can be repeated as many times as needed to complete the task.

A discussion of the theories on which this exercise is based can be found in Appendix E: Leadership and Followership—Theoretical Underpinnings, which may be used as a handout for debriefing with students after the exercise concludes.

Timing

As an introduction to major concepts in organizational behavior and management, the exercise is most effective when it is used at the beginning of a module on leadership and followership. While lower level undergraduates typically can articulate ideas about leadership, they often have not considered the role of follower, the importance of followership, or the interdependent nature of the follower–leader relationship; the exercise helps to highlight these ideas.

This exercise can be completed within 50 minutes; however, more time can be added to incorporate additional leadership topics. Table 1 provides a summary of the intended timing of the exercise. The recommended class size for this activity is 10 to 40 students with multiple work groups comprised of four to five members each.

Materials Needed

Students will need a copy of the Exercise Sheets (Appendix A: Individual Worksheet for Most Admired Leader, and Appendix B: Individual Worksheet for Most Admired Follower). The instructor will need copies of Appendix C: Group List for Most Admired Leader and Appendix D: Group List for Most Admired Follower to distribute to groups during the exercise, as well as a whiteboard or flipchart and appropriate writing tools for listing the characteristics described by each group of students.

Advance Preparation by Students

Students do not need to prepare in advance for this exercise.

Advance Preparation by Instructor

Before running the exercise with students, the instructor should:

- Read through the entire exercise.
- Decide whether to use impromptu groups or standing teams and determine how to have a fairly equal number of students working on either leader or follower characteristics.
- Determine whether to allow two students to volunteer as board recorders or to designate two students at the specific time.
- Gather the writing materials needed for whiteboard or flipchart.
- Print or photocopy the worksheets for students that are provided in Appendix A: Individual Worksheet for Most Admired Leader and Appendix B: Individual Worksheet for Most Admired Follower. One-half of the class will work on leader characteristics and one-half will work on follower characteristics, so print or photocopy accordingly. Provide a worksheet for each student.

TABLE 1
Time Table for Conducting the Exercise

Estimated Time	Action
2 minutes in class	Instructor briefly introduces exercise to students, divides class in half, and distributes individual worksheets (please see Appendices A and B).
3 minutes in class	Students individually jot down notes to describe either their most admired leader or most admired follower.
7 minutes in class	Students form in groups of four or five; all group members should have the same topic, i.e. leader or follower. Instructor distributes one group list worksheet to each group (please see Appendices C and D). Each group appoints one scribe to write all characteristics that students discuss as they share the attributes that they have identified about their most admired leader or follower. Each group also appoints a spokesperson, who may or may not be the same person as the scribe.
7–10 minutes in class	Plenary session in which leader groups and follower groups share characteristics discussed in their group. Groups alternate sharing characteristics one at a time. Two student volunteers record groups' findings. One volunteer writes leader qualities on white board; one volunteer writes follower qualities on white board.
15–20 minutes in class, as time allows	Instructor leads plenary class discussion about similarities and differences between the two lists. Instructor ties student-generated characteristics to readings or theories included in module. Depending on design of module, this discussion may continue in another 50 minute class or be extended for an 80 minute class.

- Print or photocopy the worksheets for the group compilations that are provided in Appendix C: Group List for Most Admired Leader and Appendix D: Group List for Most Admired Follower. Provide a worksheet for each group.
- Decide whether to appoint a student to the role of Devil's Advocate for the plenary class discussion. If this option is used, the instructor should brief the selected student before the exercise is run.

TEACHING NOTES

Instructions for Running the Exercise

Provide only a brief introduction to the exercise. Communicate to the students that you are seeking their assistance with working on a team activity examining the behaviors, characteristics, and qualities of successful leaders and followers. Then proceed with these four steps:

Administering the exercise:

1. Split the class into two groups of equal size, where one group of students is tasked with reflecting on their most admired leader and the other group of students is tasked with reflecting on their most admired follower.
2. Distribute individual worksheets to each student—either leader or follower worksheet. Worksheets for this purpose are provided in Appendix A: Individual Worksheet for Most Admired Leader and Appendix B: Individual Worksheet for Most Admired Follower.
3. Individual students should take three minutes to complete the first part of the exercise.
 - a. Ask students to think of the best leader or best follower they have ever known or seen closely enough to observe his or her behavior.
 - b. Using their individual worksheets to create a written record, students should list the behaviors, characteristics, and qualities that make that person an admirable leader or follower.
4. Upon completion of the first part of the exercise, students will form into small work groups of four to five members within their respective topical area (i.e., most admired leader or most admired follower). For the next seven minutes, each group should do the following:
 - a. Appoint a spokesperson for the group.
 - b. Appoint a scribe for the group who is responsible for compiling the list of characteristics. The spokesperson and the scribe can be the same person but need not be.
 - c. Make one consolidated list of all of the characteristics, behaviors, and qualities members of the group developed when reflecting on their leader or follower. Worksheets for this purpose are provided in Appendix C: Group List for Most Admired Leader and Appendix D: Group List for Most Admired Follower.

After all groups have completed their lists, the instructor should ask for two volunteers—one to write leader characteristics on the board and one to write follower characteristics on the board. Next, the instructor should ask the groups in the leader and follower sides to offer one characteristic on their lists. To ensure that the board recorders have time to write, the instructor may need to alternate between one leader characteristic and one follower characteristic. It generally takes a while—10 minutes or so—for the groups to exhaust their lists. When one side runs out of characteristics, individuals on the

other side will often continue to add characteristics. Depending upon students' experiences, the lists may have some overlap or may have a lot of differences. After all characteristics are listed, the volunteer board recorders should sit down.

Leading the Discussion

To facilitate discussion of the leader and follower characteristics provided and to guide the class toward the learning objectives for the exercise, the instructor can ask, "Are there any words in the leader list that wouldn't describe a good leader?" and "Are there any words in the follower list that wouldn't describe a good follower?" For a descriptor that is offered for one category but is better suited for the other category, ask the student(s) why that word was associated with the category offered. Typically, some students will defend its inclusion while other students will disagree about its categorization, leading to a richer discussion of differences between leaders and followers. To ensure that differences are expressed, the instructor may want to appoint one or more Devil's Advocates to the plenary discussion before the exercise is run. The Devil's Advocates deliberately take a different path than that taken by the group and raise questions that cause members to rethink their positions on issues. By so doing it is thought that the team resists falling victim to group decision-making errors, such as groupthink (Mackin, 2007).

After an initial discussion of the leader and follower characteristics, the instructor can use the learning objectives to structure the discussion in the following manner.

Compare and contrast leader and follower behavioral attributes. The instructor can expand on the leadership and followership discussion by asking the class to identify similarities between the two lists associated with effective leader and follower characteristics, qualities, and behaviors. To highlight the similarities, the instructor may circle words, draw arrows, or make other marks or notes. The class then proceeds with discussing the similarities, as well as the differences. Engaging in this discussion of similarities and differences between leader and follower attributes may assist students with understanding one of the foundational themes in followership literature: that leaders, at times, are also followers and that leaders and followers may engage in this role reversal several times a day (Baker et al., 2011), which may be instrumental in achieving organizational goals. If students do not identify the possibility of swapping roles, the instructor may ask students, "Do these similarities mean that a follower can act like a leader or that a leader can act like a follower?"; "Are there times when a follower takes over for a leader?; If yes, can you provide an example?"; "Do these differences mean that a follower cannot ever act like a leader or a leader cannot ever act like a follower?"; and "Are there any limitations to when followers and leaders can exchange roles?"

Discuss attributes that describe effective leaders and followers. In this part of the discussion, the instructor may

highlight three other foundational themes in followership for students to keep in mind: (a) The term “follower” is a positive concept, not a negative one; followers should not be considered nonleaders. (b) Followers and leaders have a shared common purpose of organizational goals. (c) The follower and leader roles are of equal weight, and both parties must work together to achieve organizational goals (Baker, 2007). The instructor facilitates this discussion and emphasizes these foundational themes by introducing or, if already identified by students, restating qualities and behaviors associated with both effective leaders and followers. This exercise is grounded in the leadership research of Kouzes and Posner (2012) and the followership research of Rosenbach et al. (2012), so we use the attributes and qualities identified in those models, as described in the following paragraph. The concepts of implicit theories of leadership and followership may be introduced here.

Key attributes of exemplary leaders are that they inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, encourage the heart, model the way, and enable others to act (Kouzes & Posner, 2012). Effective follower characteristics can be divided into groups related to performance (doing the job, working with others, embracing change, and recognizing oneself as a resource that must be protected from burnout) and relationship with the leader (identifying with the leader, building trust, courageously communicating, and negotiating differences) (Rosenbach et al., 2012). Upon reviewing the leader and follower characteristics, the instructor may ask, “What do these characteristics suggest about how leaders and followers work together to accomplish work goals?” Throughout this discussion, the instructor may periodically reinforce the positive nature of the follower role and the partner-like working relationship between leaders and followers by asking students to reflect upon follower contributions and to consider situations in which they have seen followers and leaders working together to meet common objectives.

The instructor may guide the students deeper into this discussion by asking students how they formed their views of effective leaders and followers and of the characteristics associated with each. In keeping with implicit theories of leadership and followership, the instructor may ask, “Why do you believe that this specific characteristic is associated with effective leaders (or followers)?” As students answer, the instructor may match their answers with theoretical bases of implicit theories: Prototypes are rooted in their own experiences, their own reference groups, and the role models to which they have been exposed (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Rush et al., 1977). The instructor may prompt students to recall their early exposure to leaders in their young lives, as delivered by coaches, teachers, the parents of friends, and teammates. Similarly, the instructor may ask students about their early exposure to followers, as demonstrated by adults who work in a supporting role in community, religious, work, or sports organizations, or by youth who are not official leaders but who are influential in classrooms or teams of which they are a part. The instructor may then remind students that we develop prototypes in our minds

of what is “best,” as well as what is “worst,” based on these observations and experiences.

Explore the interdependent nature of the leader–follower relationship. Next, the instructor may draw attention to the roles of follower and leaders and how they are of equal weight by expanding on the interdependent nature of the leader–follower relationship, which is another foundational theme in the followership literature. The instructor may explore the concept of leader–follower interdependence by asking students which leader and follower attributes are complementary and which may inhibit a good working relationship. For instance, if students suggest that a leader should be motivational and followers should be collaborative and adaptive to change, the instructor may ask the students, “Why are these leader and follower attributes important for achieving organizational goals?” or “What will be the outcome to the organization if leaders and followers do not possess these attributes?” This discussion may be extended by examining whether qualities needed for achieving organizational goals are the same for all organizations. Differences between types of organizations, such as service, manufacturing, government, and nonprofit, and the effect of qualities needed by leaders and followers in those sectors can then be explored.

In order to underscore the dynamic processes captured in ILTs and IFTs, the instructor may ask students, “What implicit views do you have about effective leaders and effective followers?” “Do the actual leaders and followers with whom you interact match your own implicit theories?” “What happens when your actual leader or your actual follower behaves in a way that you don’t expect, and that contradicts your implicit theory?” “How are interactions affected when both follower and leader have implicit theories of each other?”

Review basic concepts of followership and leadership. After discussion centered on each of the above learning goals is finished, the instructor can summarize the discussion by reviewing the primary behaviors and characteristics associated with effective leaders and effective followers, by restating the concepts of implicit leader and follower theories, and by reiterating the foundational themes of followership. During this summary, the instructor may reinforce learning objectives by using students’ earlier comments, as time allows. As the instructor reviews behaviors and themes, the instructor may remind students to think about their own prototypes of effective leaders and followers and to also think about their workplaces, student organizations, sports teams, community groups, or religious groups for examples of each theme as a prelude for upcoming class sessions that cover these topics. (See Appendix E: Leadership and Followership—Theoretical Underpinnings for a summary of theories that may be used as a sample student handout.)

A useful part of this conclusion of the debriefing discussion may focus on the fact that leadership is both a process and an outcome. Students who are early to the discussion of leadership tend to think about it in terms of “making others do things.” One

idea that this exercise adds to their understanding of leadership is the notion that leadership is a process that is rooted in the perceptions that followers and leaders have of those roles, which influences their interactions with each other. A leader without the partnership and support of his or her followers may be a leader in name only.

Upon completion of the exercise, the instructor may decide to collect the group worksheets (i.e., Appendix C: Group List for Most Admired Leader, and Appendix D: Group List for Most Admired Follower) to facilitate discussion of these topics in future classes.

Typical Student Reactions

Student participants react favorably, calling the exercise “really engaging” and noting the amount of class participation during the exercise. During and after the exercise, students are often able to draw connections between successful leaders and followers and become more intrigued about the leadership process. As such, this exercise serves as a good introduction for leadership and followership theories and concepts to be discussed in future lessons. The exercise also stimulates thought about contributions needed from leaders and followers to achieve organizational goals, as well as reflection about one’s own perceptions and abilities. Students have commented that seeing a list of leader characteristics helped them to realize that they possessed those characteristics but were not using them to be a leader. Similarly, some students who are strong in leadership skills have stated that the exercise helped them to realize the importance of being a good follower, as well as being a good leader.

Learning Objectives and Other Discussion Topics

To reinforce the learning objectives, a one-page take-home assignment may be provided, allowing students to reflect on their experience with the exercise. Specifically, students may address what they learned about leadership and followership, leader and follower behaviors, and how leaders and followers work together to achieve organizational goals.

The preceding discussion topics represent the tip of the iceberg in introducing students to leadership, followership, and the leader–follower relationship. To keep this exercise suitable for a 50- or 80-minute class, we have focused on fundamental concepts in each construct. Other aspects of these fields that may arise during the initial debriefing may be pursued in greater depth in future classes, as the instructor prefers and in concurrence with the learning objectives for the course. Additional topics include other theories of leadership and followership with which the instructor may be familiar. Some other related research streams include toxic leadership and followership (Kellerman, 2004, 2008; Lipman-Blumen, 2005) and adverse leadership (Peus, Braun, & Frey, 2012). Another aspect of the leader–follower relationship concerns power. Discussion of power within the leader–follower relationship could highlight

bases of power (Raven, 1993), power differentials across hierarchical levels, and how to gain power regardless of the level that one holds in the organization.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The study of leadership processes is an important topic in classrooms. This easy-to-use Most Admired Leader/Most Admired Follower exercise introduces students to basic concepts about leadership and followership, as well as to the behaviors demonstrated by effective leaders and followers. It also introduces the concept of leaders and followers working interdependently to achieve organizational goals. Although the exercise was designed for use with undergraduate students who have little firsthand knowledge of what it means to lead and/or follow, it may be adapted for use for upper level undergraduate and graduate students to introduce the main topics as well as others related to organizational behavior and human resource management.

The Most Admired Leader/Most Admired Follower exercise engages students by asking them to first work independently, then with a small group, and last with a plenary group to learn about leaders and followers. By asking students to use their own role models and examples, the exercise helps them to gain a better understanding of the qualities needed to be effective leaders and effective followers and to understand the importance of both roles in achieving organizational goals.

NOTE

1. The “Most Admired Leader/Most Admired Follower” exercise was adapted from “My Best Boss/Leader” (Bowen, Lewicki, Hall, & Hall, 1997), an exercise designed to distinguish between managers and leaders. We have adapted the exercise by changing its timing to occur at the beginning of a course module on leadership and followership, by focusing on transformational leadership theory, and by introducing the concept of followership.

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APPENDIX A

Individual Worksheet for Most Admired Leader

Instructions: Think of a leader whom you greatly admire. This person should be someone whom you know or have seen closely enough to observe his or her behavior. Next, list the behaviors, characteristics, and qualities that make that person an admirable leader. Twenty spaces are provided, but you may list fewer than 20.

Behaviors, Characteristics and Qualities

1.	11.
2.	12.
3.	13.
4.	14.
5.	15.
6.	16.
7.	17.
8.	18.
9.	19.
10.	20.

APPENDIX B

Individual Worksheet for Most Admired Follower

Instructions: Think of a follower whom you greatly admire. This person should be someone whom you know or have seen closely enough to observe his or her behavior. Next, list the behaviors, characteristics, and qualities that make that person an admirable follower. Twenty spaces are provided, but you may list fewer than 20.

Behaviors, Characteristics and Qualities

1.	11.
2.	12.
3.	13.
4.	14.
5.	15.
6.	16.
7.	17.
8.	18.
9.	19.
10.	20.

APPENDIX C

Group List for Most Admired Leader

Instructions: In your small group, discuss the characteristics, behaviors, and qualities that you each have individually associated with the leader whom you most admire.

One person from the group should compile below a list of all behaviors, characteristics, and qualities named by group members. List all – but only once. Use a check mark after the first mention if a behavior, characteristic, or quality is suggested more than once.

- Example: “Communication√/√” means that three group members listed “communication” on their individual lists.

Give this worksheet to the instructor at the end of the exercise.

Behaviors, Characteristics and Qualities

1.	11.
2.	12.
3.	13.
4.	14.
5.	15.
6.	16.
7.	17.
8.	18.
9.	19.
10.	20.

APPENDIX D

Group List for Most Admired Follower

Instructions: In your small group, discuss the characteristics, behaviors, and qualities that you each have individually associated with the follower whom you most admire.

One person from the group should compile below a list of all behaviors, characteristics, and qualities named by group members. List all – but only once. Use a check mark after the first mention if a behavior, characteristic, or quality is suggested more than once.

- Example: “Communication√/√” means that three group members listed “communication” on their individual lists.

Give this worksheet to the instructor at the end of the exercise.

Behaviors, Characteristics and Qualities

1.	11.
2.	12.
3.	13.
4.	14.
5.	15.
6.	16.
7.	17.
8.	18.
9.	19.
10.	20.

APPENDIX E

Leadership and Followership – Theoretical Underpinnings¹

Who Are Leaders and Followers?

There is a lot of emphasis on leaders today – whether in business, government, military, politics, or nonprofit organizations. While it is usually easy for us to recognize current or historic leaders, we may have a more difficult time naming followers because our culture seldom focuses on them. To ensure a common understanding, let’s use these definitions:

- Role: “a set of behaviors which are appropriate for a position which an individual fills” (Hollander, 1974, p. 19).
- Leader: a role in which a person guides, commands, directs, influences, collaborates with, and/or supports the activities of another or others, who are commonly called follower(s), to achieve goals held in common with the leader and/or organization (Baker & Stites-Doe, unpublished work).
- Follower: an active, participative role in which a person willingly supports the teachings or views of a leader and consciously and deliberately works toward goals held in common with the leader and/or organization (Baker & Gerlowski, 2007).

Transformational Leadership Theory

Transformational leadership is a widely embraced theory that discusses the importance of leaders in organizations. As theorized by Burns (1978), transformational leaders seek to understand followers’ motives and fulfill their needs, resulting in the full engagement of the follower with the leader. Their mutual appreciation of each other may stimulate the follower to become a leader and may stimulate the leader to become more moral (Burns, 1978). Since Burns’ classic work, many researchers have proposed different approaches and sets of attributes that are characteristic of a transformational leader.

Kouzes and Posner (2012) describe five exemplary practices of transformational leaders. These include their ability to inspire a shared vision, challenge the process, encourage the heart, model the way, and enable others to act. Leaders who demonstrate transformational behaviors such as these are viewed favorably by their followers, inspire their followers to work harder for the leader and organization, and are associated with better organizational outcomes than those leaders who demonstrate other styles of leadership (Bass, 1990).

Followership Theory

In one approach to followership that emerged in the 1990s, authors promoted the importance of the follower role and

distinguished effective from ineffective followers by their behaviors (Chaleff, 1995; Kelley, 1988, 1992; Potter, III, Rosenbach, & Pittman, 1996). In these expressed views, effective followers were defined either by their critical thinking and active behaviors (Kelley, 1988), or by their courageous behaviors (Chaleff, 1995) or were distinguished by their performance and relationship behaviors (Potter, III et al., 1996). Those who discussed follower behaviors also thought that the behaviors of effective followers led to a different leader-follower relationship: rather than subordinates, followers were viewed as partners (Chaleff, 1995; Kelley, 1991; Pittman, Rosenbach, & Potter, III, 1998) and collaborators (Berg, 1998; Rost, 2008).

Rosenbach et al. (2012) propose that effective followers must partner with their leaders to achieve organizational success. The authors posit that effective followers demonstrate four performance characteristics and four relationship characteristics. Effective followers exhibit good performance by doing the job, working with others, embracing change, and recognizing themselves as a resource that must be protected from burnout (Rosenbach et al.). In building relationships with their leaders, effective followers demonstrate the abilities to identify with their leaders, build trust, courageously communicate, and negotiate differences (Rosenbach et al.). Thus, at the same time that leaders may work hard to build trust and communicate with followers, so do followers seek to build trust and communicate with leaders.

Implicit Leadership Theory (ILT) and Implicit Followership Theory (IFT)

Implicit theories about leadership and followership represent one's personal assumptions about either leaders or followers. People, or perceivers, are thought to form mental prototypes, or implicit theories, of ideal leaders or followers based on their direct observations of leader or follower behaviors, their own socialization, and their past experiences (Epitropaki & Martin, 2004; Rush, Thomas, & Lord, 1977; Sy, 2010). The perceiver encodes these experiences in memory and recalls them at later times when interacting with a stimulus person, such as his/her supervisor or subordinate. If there is a good match between the perceiver's prototype and the stimulus person, the perceiver will recognize that person as a "good" leader or follower, even if actual performance does not justify that rating (Shondrick & Lord, 2010).

Recently, scholars studying implicit theories have recognized that long-term memories may blur over time, leading to an inexact recall of an ideal prototype. They also recognize that real-time situational context affects implicit theories (Lord & Emrich, 2001), leading to new research streams about the social and cognitive processes underlying the dynamic interactions between leaders and followers (Epitropaki et al., 2013; Shondrick & Lord, 2010).

NOTE

1. This summary may also be used as a student handout.

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