OBJECTIVE: What compels someone to abandon their individual autonomy to subscribe to another's authority and to provide their best effort in support of that authority when there is no extrinsic motivation? I suggest that the answer to this question is "Followership."

I am interested in researching the idea of followership, in addressing questions related to how people understand the idea of followership, if at all, and how people (generally) might contrast followership with leadership. I believe that at least four characteristics represent followership:

- One who exhibits "followership" commits their best effort to ensure the success of the individual they have elected to support ("follow").

- Followership is not dependent on extrinsic motivators like rewards, recognition, or incentives, and therefore is independent of the individual being "followed;" followership is represented in the attitude and behaviors of the "follower" without regard to the leader or the task.

- Followership is not enhanced or degraded by organizational policies or procedures, although opportunities to act may be limited by such policies and procedures.

- Followership requires commitment to the higher objective and not the individual who is fulfilling the leader role.

What is followership? The purpose of this study is to increase understanding of the role that follower identity construction plays in the willingness of an individual to subscribe to the authority of another and commit their best effort to a specified outcome. Examination of available literature related to leader-follower roles and identities consistently fails to examine how followership identities are created and exhibited from the follower's perspective in isolation from leadership development (Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carsten, 2014; M. Van Vugt, Hogan, Robert, & Kaiser, Robert B., 2008).

RATIONALE: The questions surrounding followership require further study because followership, in contrast to leadership, has very little in the way of foundational support as it relates to the attitudes and

behaviors expressed by individuals from the followers' perspective (Collinson, 2006; M. Van Vugt, 2006). The majority of leadership research is oriented on the leader and behaviors the leader enacts to influence the behavior and attitudes of their followers (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Studying followership from the followers' perspective may identify traits or characteristics that are nuanced and not apparent from the leader perspective.

PROCESS: The first phase of my research would identify participants' understanding of followership as a term and what attributes they ascribe to followership. I would gain this information through interviews of students, faculty and staff at Kansas State University. I would use convenience sampling and seek volunteers from Communication Studies, Veteran's Support, Leadership Studies, and the Student Government Association. I selected this sample based on their availability and an expectation that their academic affiliations predispose them to a fundamental understanding of leader and follower roles.

EXPECTATION: I expect most participants to describe leader and follower characteristics, expected attitudes and behaviors, and at least a fundamental expectation of how those roles can be carried out. I expect responses ranging from, "leaders are in charge and followers are not," to expressions of leadership theory (ies) and possibly an idea of followership. Generally, I do not expect participants to be able to describe different leadership theories or styles and I do not expect many, if any, to have a fundamental understanding of followership in any of its current forms. I expect that most participants will/are likely to extend their understanding of leadership to followership. I believe the answers I receive will reflect the participants legitimate view on each question.

POTENTIAL IMPACT: How followership is understood, especially in contrast to leadership, will enable more focused research on when and how followership identities are developed or adopted, and then to

how followership characteristics/traits/behaviors can be developed. This research has wide reaching

implications for peer influenced performance in civic engagement, volunteerism, and may even

contribute to organizational structures with distributed leadership roles and project-oriented models.

Works Sited

Collinson, D. (2006). Rethinking followership: A post-structuralist analysis of follower identities. *The Leadership Quarterly, 17*, 179-189. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.12.005

Uhl-Bien, M., Riggio, R. E., Lowe, K. B., & Carsten, M. K. (2014). Followership theory: A review and research agenda. *The Leadership Quarterly, 25*(1), 83-104. doi:10.1016/j.leaqua.2013.11.007

Van Vugt, M. (2006). Evolutionary origins of leadership and followership. *Pers Soc Psychol Rev, 10*, 354-371. doi:10.1207/s15327957pspr1004_5

Van Vugt, M., Hogan, Robert, & Kaiser, Robert B. (2008). Leadership, Followership, and Evolution: Some Lessons from the Past. *American Psychologist, 63*, 82-196.