Followers Ready for Leadership as Demonstrated by St. Mary and St. Josephine

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Roundtable: Followership

This presentation explores the link between Chaleff's (2009) courageous followership model and Kellerman's (2007) diehard and Kelley's (1988, 2008) star performer models as demonstrated through the lives of Mary, mother of Jesus, and Josephine Bakhita, canonized in the year 2000. As shown through a sacred texture analysis, these female followers exemplify characteristics that lead to preparation for higher levels of organizational responsibilities (Hersey et al., 1979; Robbins, 2004, 2010; Schermerhorn, 1997). The study is a contribution to research on females as followers.

Keywords: star performer, diehard, follower, sacred texture, courageous follower, Chaleff, Kellerman, Kelley, St. Mary, Bakhita, St. Josephine

Jesus said, "for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great" (Luke 9:48). A sacred texture review of the discipleship of St. Mary, also known as the Blessed Virgin Mary, and St. Josephine Bakhita, the first contemporary African female, canonized by the Catholic Church, shows that they exemplify the Lord's message as well as followership theories. The research question asked, How do the followership models help leaders identify and develop new leaders? The current study examines how the theories of Kelley (1988, 2008) and Kellerman (2007) feed into Chaleff's (2009) courageous followership model as demonstrated by the lives of St. Josephine and St. Mary. I conclude that a progression of leader-member exchanges helps prepare these followers for leadership. This study is a contribution to the research on female followers.

Literary Review

The power of followers is the basis for democracy, though it was not until the revolutions of the 1960s that the study of followers drew the attention of leadership and management theorists (Kelley, 1988; Kellerman, 2007; Parker, 1984). Traditional management theories focused on controlling subordinates rather than coordinating

with them to accomplish goals. Kelley (1988, 2008) recognized that followers had something to contribute to the mission other than obedient subservience. He categorized subordinates according to the level of demonstrated organizational contributions, ranging from those who did their work as instructed to those whose high energy and positivity pushed their organizations forward. Followers labeled as sheep described passive personnel content with their work, *yes* people described dependent staff happy to defer to leadership, and survivors described pragmatic staff who shifted in the direction of the wind. Alienated staff were independent thinkers who tended to be cynical, while effective followers were self-managed, energetic performers committed to organizational goals and missions.

Kellerman (2007) similarly separated workers into five categories, but with a view of how they could best be managed. She classified detached and uninterested personnel as isolate; passive observers as bystanders; ambitious invested staff as participants; engaged and invested staff as activists; and dedicated, motivated, and committed staff as diehard. Chaleff (2009) identified the top-level workers of both categories—dedicated, energetic, committed, and motivated—as courageous followers.

Chaleff's (2009) followership model defines the traits most beneficial to organizational progress. Chaleff opined, "Followers and leaders both orbit around the purpose" (p. 13); therefore, leaders should consider not only the contributions of their subordinates but the traits that are most useful to the organization. The five traits presented are not categorized, so one is not favored above the other. Courageous followers assume responsibility when they help to improve organizational processes and activities. They maximize their value by creating growth opportunities. They serve the organizational mission and use their skills and abilities to ensure positive outcomes. Courageous followers value organizational harmony and thus are not afraid to alert leaders of issues that may cause conflict or do not align with organizational goals. However, they champion changes for the better and will take moral actions when necessary. Courageous followers embody the adage "do not harm." Courageous followers fit the type of follower that leaders most often target for development (Hersey et al., 1979). Such personnel can function independently and require little leader–member exchange. They are skilled, self-motivated, demonstrate a high-performance level, and handle delegation with decorum. They are at the top of a growth progression that begins with receiving instruction (telling), moves to a higher level of supervision (selling), and then to a level of engagement (participating). The need for supervision lessens as the follower grows in responsibility. Table 1 depicts the followership models; the first two categories of Kelley (1988, 2008) and the first three categories of Kellerman (2008) align with Chaleff's (2009) model.

Table 1: Followership Models

Kelley (1988, 2008)	Kellerman (2008)	Chaleff (2009)
Effective follower/Star follower • Independent thinker • Energetic • Assertive • Self-starter • Risk-taker	Diehard • Devoted • Motivated • Committed • Supportive • Dedicated	Assumes responsibility • Committed • Creates opportunities for growth • Maximizes their value • Improves organizational processes/activities • Takes ownership Serves • Takes additional responsibilities • Assert themselves where their strengths complement the leader
Alienated follower • Critical • Independent • Energetic • Have a vision • Courageous	Activist • Engaged • Invested • Courageous • Critical thinkers • Competent Participant • Ambitious • Invested	Challenges • Value organizational harmony • Speaks up when they see or sense conflict with organizational goals/policies • Willing to examine the leader's action Helps transform • Change champion • Supports the leader in the change Takes moral action • Will take a stand for higher values • May refuse or appeal an order • May become a whistleblower
Survivor/Pragmatist • Risk-averse	Bystander • Observer	

Kelley (1988, 2008)	Kellerman (2008)	Chaleff (2009)
• Observant	• Nonparticipant • Passive	
Yes People		
• Dependent • Deferent • Dependent		
Sheep	Isolate	
• Passive • Uncritical • Lack motivation	• Detached • Uninterested • Support the status quo	

Together, the theories shown in Table 1 indicate that people enter the workforce with a variety of social and psychological perspectives that influence their level of organizational contributions. However, followers do not have to be left at their entry point but can be developed through guidance and training to advance. St. Mary, the Holy Mother, and St. Josephine Bakhita, the first contemporary African saint, demonstrate the maturation of followers.

Method

Sociorhetorical interpretation is a tool that integrates several methods of analysis to illuminate the meaning of a text. The name can be traced to a 1984 "integration of rhetorical, anthropological, and social-psychological insights in a study of the Gospel of Mark" (Robbins, 2010, p. 192; see also Robbins, 2004). However, by the 1990s, the framework presented five ways of considering a text through the interrelationship of its elements (Robbins, 1996). These were identified as social–cultural texture, intertexture, inner texture, ideological texture, and sacred texture. In addition, sociorhetorical interpretation found new audiences as researchers applied its features to the study of texts in addition to the Bible (Robbins, 2004, 2010). The method supports "programmatic analysis and interpretation" of a range of literature from a variety of origins (Robbins, 2010, p. 195).

Sacred texture explores the relationship between God and humans (Henson et al., 2020; Robbins, 2010). Intertwined with the other four textures, it provides a foundation for understanding the human response to the calling of God. Its subtextures include a deity, human redemption, religious community, ethics, and—most important to this

work—holy person and human commitment. A holy person is described as one who exemplifies the call and will of God, and human commitment examines the level of their response.

Sacred texture is a tool for understanding followership, as represented by St. Mary and St. Bakhita, as it can be applied against the biblical text for the former and the life story as described in the literature for the latter (Robbins, 2004, 2010). Both Mary and Bakhita fit the priestly rhetorolect as viewed through the prism of early Christianity (Robbins, n.d., 2010; Watson & Robbins, 1998). This discourse explores the lives and characters of people selected by God for specific purposes in line with his desire for human redemption.

St. Mary, Mother of the Church

God never authorized or approved behavior that depersonalized women, who are called to be disciples first and above all other roles (Borland, 1991; Witherington, 1987). They are parallel with men under God's grace and participate equally in the community of believers. The Lord speaks to people through their filters, so truth must be separated from the culture and historicity of the period. Borland (1991) advised that the settings of God's revelations "should not be confused with the revelations" (p. 105). In the Lord's camp, men and women worked side by side—praying, providing finances and meals, and discussing theology. Note that it was a woman who Jesus sent with the message of his resurrection to the apostles, for which Mary Magdelene has been called the "Apostle to the Apostles" (Atteberry, 2018; Paweski, 2020).

Jesus never treated women differently than men, despite the culture of his time (Bessey, 2013). His value of females was demonstrated in his interactions with them. He viewed them as human above their gender and dealt with them as equals, treating them with dignity and respect (Bessey, 2013). He spoke to them in public (John 4:7-26; Luke 7:12-13); though it was against the mores of the time, he addressed them directly, instead of their fathers or husbands. He did not condescend to them or patronize them. They were not too sweet or delicate, and they were not more manipulative or less insecure.

Jesus' tendency to include women in his parables as both positive and negative examples indicated his acceptance of their humanity and inclusion in God's plan (Witherington, 1987). They did not get a pass because of their gender but were held accountable for their sins and failures in the same way as men (Luke 7:47-48). What the Lord required of men, he required of women. He welcomed Mary, sister of Martha, to learn at his feet with the disciples, noting that her choice was more important than serving with her sister. Martha, however, was identified as a minister or servant (*diakeno*), along with Mary, the mother of Jesus; Mary Magdelene; Salome; Joanna; and Susanna (Bessey, 2013; Borland, 1991).

Mentioned 47 times in scripture, Mary, the mother of Jesus, presents an outstanding model as a follower of Christ (Borland, 1991; Trigilio & Brighenti, 2022). The daughter of Joachim and Anne, she is remembered by various titles, including Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Grace, and Blessed Virgin Mary, all representing devotion to her as the mother of Christ. As a young woman living in Nazareth, she received the annunciation that she would be the mother of the anointed flesh of God, whom she would call Jesus. Thus, Mary began a role that would define her life and purpose, as she announced in the Magnificat: "all generations shall call me blessed" (Luke 1:48). Grisez (1997) noted that acknowledgment was an act of faith, making Mary the first Christian as she was the first to believe that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Mary gave birth to the Savior and presented the opportunity for the Messiah's first miracle at the wedding of Cana (Borland, 1991). With the host running out of wine, the Lord filled the need by converting water to wine at his mother's request. She had watched her son with wonder, pondering the prophecies she and Joseph, her husband, had received (Matthew 1:20-21; Luke 2:15-18, 29-32, 38) and Jesus's own words (Luke 2:48). Seeing the anointing and power on his life, she knew he could help (Luke 2:19, 51). Jesus's compliance demonstrated his level of trust in her counsel (Trigilio & Brighenti, 2022). She witnessed his sacrifice, remaining at the cross despite her heart breaking at seeing his pain (Borland, 1991; Grisez, 1997; Hauer, 2010). She was there at his ascension and one of those who received the Holy Spirit in the upper room (Acts 1:12).

Mary's devotion was not overlooked by the Catholic Church, who have revered her with several titles, though the reverence is an honor, not worship (Trigilio & Brighenti, 2022). Mariology, or the study of Mary, describes her various titles—Our Lady of Lourdes, Our Lady of Grace, Our Lady of Peace, etc.—each associated with some perception of the saint. Trigilio and Brighenti (2022) opined that Mary was elevated to mother of the church when Jesus commended her as the mother of the Apostle John (John 19:26-27). Trigilio and Brighenti said, "The bestowal of Mary to John is symbolic insofar as John represents all disciples and all men and women" (p. 306). And so, sometime in the sixth century, August 15 was set as the festival of her assumption and is followed by many others recognizing traits and events ("Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of God, Mother of the Church," 2022; Edwards, 1997). In addition, many Catholics in many nations claim St. Mary as their patron saint.

St. Josephine Bakhita, Patron of Sudan

On Saturday, February 8, 1947, the day of the month committed to observing St. Mary, Josephine Margaret Bakhita spoke her last words: "I am so happy. Our Lady. Our Lady" ("Saints and Angels: St. Josephine Bakhita," n.d., para. 37; Trigilio & Brighenti, 2022). Her biography varies among authors as each bends her story to suit their purpose

(Kofes, 2015). She is represented as a victim, a freedom fighter, a martyr, a political activist, and a submitted servant of God. Affectionately called "brown sister" and "black mother," Josephine Bakhita was beatified by Pope John Paul II in 1992 and canonized as a saint in 2000 (David, 2013; Maynard, 2002; "Saints and Angels: St. Josephine Bakhita," n.d.; Zanini, 2013).

Bakhita began life as the beloved daughter of a Sudanese farmer of means but was kidnapped and enslaved when she was about 9 years old (Maynard, 2002; Zanini, 2013). Josephine, who was called "Bakhita" or "Lucky" by her captors, could not remember her given name (Maynard, 2002; "Saints and Angels: St. Josephine Bakhita," n.d.; Zanini, 2013). She escaped once, was captured by another enslaver, and traded several times, each owner seemingly more abusive. She survived 12 years as an enslaved person and bore 114 scars on her body, marking her as one owner's property. Her situation changed when she was purchased by an Italian consul, who gifted her to his friends. She was responsible for caring for their daughter, where she was introduced to religious instruction. When the child's mother decided to visit her husband, who had left her to sell their home as he set up an establishment in Africa, she left her daughter and Bakhita, who was about 20, with the Canossian Sisters at the Catechumenate in Venice so that they could receive schooling. Here, Bakhita was introduced to the love of Christ. She recalled, "Those holy mothers instructed me with heroic patience and brought me into a relationship with that God, whom ever since I was a child, I had felt in my heart without knowing who He was" (Maynard, 2002, Location No. 517). The young woman embraced faith in Jesus Christ.

Bakhita developed her prayer life while watching over her young charge, but when the child's mother returned to take them to her home in Africa, Bakhita refused to because she wanted to be baptized and pursue her faith (Maynard, 2002; Zanini, 2013). The young, enslaved woman took a stand for her destiny for the first time. The woman, Maria Turina, was enraged, but Bakhita was unmoved, noting that God strengthened her so that she could follow him. The Rector of the Catechumenate supported Bakhita's decision and sought direction from his Patriarch, who consulted the Royal Procurator, who declared the illegality of slavery in Italy. At a meeting at the Catechumenate, Mrs. Turina was told the same by government officials. Bakhita was free to remain at the facility. She was baptized about 2 months later, in January 1890, as Guiseppina Margherita Fortunata (Josephine Margaret Bakhita) and received her first communion. Three years later, she became a novitiate to the House of Catechumens, where she had accepted Christ. She took her vows in 1896.

In 1902, Mother Bakhita was transferred to Schio, Italy, to serve in the Canossian House, where she became head cook (Maynard, 2002; Zanini, 2013). In 1916, as World War I erupted in Europe, she directed enlisted orderlies in the kitchen and helped to nurse wounded soldiers. She was a comfort to them, and many found her empathetic and a

source of courage and inspiration. Her life story was so inspiring that the diocese recorded her story for publication, and she soon found herself on tour. Because of her shyness in crowds, she was teamed with an experienced missionary, Mother Leopoldina Benetti, who would tell Bakhita's "Marvelous Story." Mother Bakhita would follow by expressing appreciation to the crowd and pointing them to Jesus.

Her only objection to this experience was being called poor when God had given her such an extraordinary destiny. She understood that her suffering was for God's plan (Maynard, 2002). She said, "I'm not a poor thing because I belong to the Master, and I'm in his house. People who don't know our Lord—they're the ones who are poor" (Maynard, 2002, Location No. 715). Further, she appreciated her captors because their actions ensured that she would have such an ending. Instead, she prayed that they would know the Lord.

Mother Bakhita's passion was helping to prepare young women for missionary work through which many in Africa would know Jesus (Maynard, 2002; Zanini, 2013). For this purpose, she had endured the celebrity tours and subjected herself to the crush of the crowds and the insensitivities of people to her skin color. Maynard (2002) said, "She knew very well that helping the missions wasn't confined to fundraising or going to Africa as a missionary; she was making the most effective contribution possible just by doing what she was asked to do" (Location No. 728). During World War II, she predicted that the homes in Schio would be spared during the time of the bombing, and though a factory was bombed, the houses were secure. Once 19 bombs were dropped near a residential area but did not explode, so her prophecy held.

Discussion

Though centuries apart, St. Mary and St. Josephine demonstrate the path from followership to leadership. From the followership perspective, Mary demonstrated assertiveness from the beginning (Strathearn, 2019). Though a child by contemporary standards, she challenged the messenger: "How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" (Luke 1:34). She accepted her call, choosing service (Luke 2:42) even when Simeon warned that her experience would bring pain (Luke 2:35). Because her faith never wavered in the divinity of her son, she encouraged Jesus to use his gifts to meet the needs of their hosts. Jesus received her wisdom and performed his first miracle. She proved a diehard follower, as she followed Jesus to the cross, and a star follower, receiving the Holy Spirit with the 120 disciples in the upper room. Her followership path earned her the elevation of Mother of the Church in the Catholic tradition.

As a follower of Christ, St. Josephine modeled several characteristics of the followership paradigm. She is Kelley's (2008) model of a star follower as she asserted her dependence in the face of her faith and commitment to her mission. She proved competent in the tasks assigned, whether managing the kitchen or nursing the wounded. She proved to

be a person of integrity in her service and dedication to the gospel. She modeled Kellerman's (2008) characteristics of a diehard follower as she was motivated, passionate, creative, and helpful. She exemplified the courageous follower as she assumed responsibility, served with gusto, challenged injustice, and participated in transforming the world through training and encouraging others (Chaleff, 2009). Schermerhorn (1997) explained,

> As the follower begins to move to an above-average level of readiness, it becomes appropriate for the leader to decrease not only task behavior but relationship behavior as well. Now the follower is not only ready in terms of the performance of the task but also is confident and committed. People at this level of readiness see a reduction of close supervision and an increase in delegation by the leader as a positive indication of trust and confidence. (p. 6)

St. Josephine began her journey in the most uncomfortable situation but completed it as a recognized Christian leader.

St. Mary and St. Josephine model the followers' progression to leadership. Their energy, devotion, commitment, and other high-performance traits positioned them to receive guidance, counsel, mentorship, and delegation, which earned them leadership positions (see Figure 1; Hersey et al., 1979). Mary was guided in her assignment by the angel and counseled by her cousin Elizabeth (Luke 1:39-45). Then as a disciple of Jesus, Mary was mentored and delegated leadership responsibilities in John 19:26-27 (Trigilio & Brighenti, 2022). Josephine was guided to Christ by the Canossian Sisters and received counsel and mentorship from the Rector. The Canossian Sisters also mentored and delegated her leadership roles in managing the convent kitchen during World War I, publishing her story, and sending her on tour to represent Christ.

Figure 1

Progression from Followership to Leadership
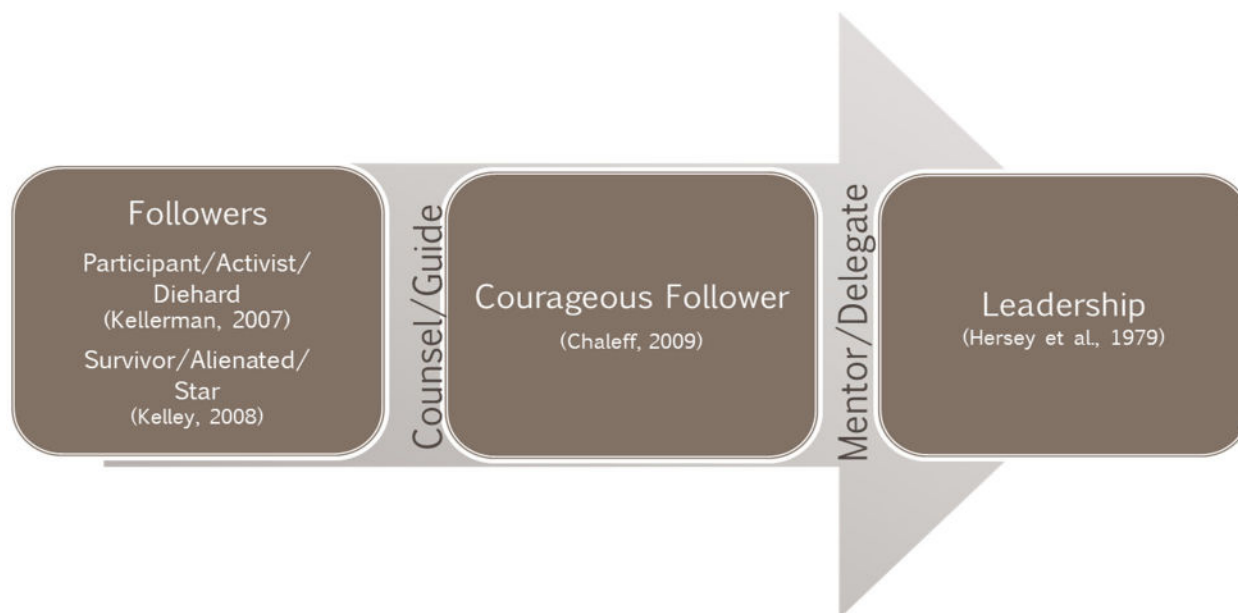
From observing the followership path of these women, leaders may be encouraged to identify talent for development through the tools of charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration—the basics of transformational leadership (Yukl, 2006). According to Kellerman (2008), "Leadership does not simply happen, it can be learned and taught" (p. 13). In application, leaders should consider the traits of followers who demonstrate competence, responsibility, and energetic commitment to counsel and guide them into positions of responsibility. The followers may then be mentored and delegated duties according to their level of service, participation, intellectual engagement (ability to challenge), and ethics. Such actions will enable courageous followers to dawn the leadership mantle.

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