Foreword

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For eons, except when they fomented revolutions, followers have lived beneath the eclipsing shadow of leaders. Mostly, they became lost in a faceless mass. So, it is hardly surprising that children, when asked, "What do you want to be when you grow up?" rarely respond, "A follower." Small wonder, too, given the *Webster Dictionary's* definition of a follower:

1. A person who follows another in regard to his or her ideas or belief; disciple or adherent

2. A person who imitates, copies, or takes as a model or ideal: An attendant, servant, or retainer

3. A person who follows or subscribes to another's posts on a social-networking website

4. *British Informal.* A boyfriend or suitor, especially of a maidservant

Historically, those few who did aspire to followership found little guidance from philosophers or social scientists. Perhaps, the best known advice from ancient philosophers came from Aristotle, who believed, "He who cannot be a good follower cannot be a leader." Aristotle, for all his wisdom, perceived followership only as a necessary prelude to a more important role: leader.

In our relatively recent world, accustomed to regarding followers as "victims of groupthink" (Janis, 1972), the outlook seemed quite bleak. Consequently, Robert E. Kelley's now-classic 1988 *Harvard Business Review* article, "In Praise of Followers," came as a thunder-clap to a world virtually mono-focused on leaders and leadership. Four years later, insistently laboring in the near still-born field of followership, Kelley sounded a louder call with *The Power of Followership* (1992). This time, the infant field actually began to take a few deep breaths. Even then, there was no viable "community of scholars" communicating about followership.

In rather short order, however, Ira Chaleff's *The Courageous Follower* (1995) opened new followership vistas, offering followers hope and guidance in their previously de-limited roles. My own fascination with the field came from years of observing several blatant, but charismatic, toxic

leaders. That troubling experience left me wondering why their followers – including boards of directors, employees, the media, and other supporters – knowingly put up with them (*The Allure of Toxic Leaders*, 2004). Barbara Kellerman, in her work on *Bad Leadership* (2004), also trained her discerning lens on these and other leadership issues. Several years later, she explored followers' critical impact on leaders (*Followership*, 2008).

In 2005, Ira Chaleff followed his own advice about courage. To wit, primarily through Chaleff's urging, under the stewardship of Ron Riggio, at the Kravis Leadership Institute, Claremont McKenna College, with a modest assist from the Institute for Advanced Studies in Leadership, at the Peter F. Drucker and Masatoshi Ito Graduate School of Management, the Kravis-de-Roulet. Conference convened the first full-blown conference on followership. Hosted by Claremont McKenna College, in February, 2006, the conference, entitled, "Rethinking Followership," offered a platform to scholars from around the world. The output of that conference, *The Art of Followership* (2008), became the first multi-authored volume on followership.

Thanks to the efforts of Rob Koonce and Ira Chaleff, in fall, 2014, the International Leadership Association (ILA) sponsored a full-day "International Followership Symposium," in San Diego, California. This issue of the *Journal of Leadership Education* represents an outgrowth of that symposium. This far-reaching collection features the research of numerous scholars, at different points in their careers, signaling that the field has outgrown its infancy.

The papers in this issue of the *Journal of Leadership Education* span the entire research spectrum, from conceptual analyses, to case studies and other qualitative and quantitative approaches. In the conceptual category, Craig E. Johnson explores the role of "moral disengagement" in "Why 'Good' Followers Go 'Bad,'" while Stephanie Colbry, Marc Hurwitz, and Roger Adair focus on "Collaboration Theory." From a conceptual vantage point, Steven Geer examines the "implicit and explicit" challenges of middle managers as they juggle their complex leader and follower roles, poised Janus-like, in the organizational hierarchy. In another conceptual contribution,

Ted A. Thomas and Paul Berg discuss how an exploration of "mission command" promises intriguing insights for followership theory and research. Jennifer L. Baublits' plea to introduce "creative capacity" as a necessary complement to followership education sounds another conceptual note.

Three case studies expose the reader to the gritty textures of real-life followership situations. In his account of POW/MIA wives' determined efforts to bring world attention to the plight of their officially-ignored husbands, Steven Smith explicates the dynamics of garnering support from strangers. J. Basil Read, III trains a laser beam on the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation's (FDIC) followership program, designed to enable employees to lead themselves and create an "organizational culture of shared leadership." Andrew Francis's research on UK secondary school teachers creates the bridge from case studies to mixed-methods research. By using both interviews and a questionnaire in a multiple case study, Francis sheds light on the "career journeys" of teacher-followers, dedicated professionals who have deliberately eschewed the administrative leadership role.

The importance of creative qualitative research is emphasized in Rachel Morris' multiple methods qualitative research of "followers" from several UK public sector organizations. In her exploration of followership as a "relational process," Morris relied upon 1) initial semi-structured interviews, 2) visual research diaries, in which participants "used images to construct their understandings," leading to 3) narratives developed in a final interview. Quantitative research is robustly represented in other papers, including Susan Keim's contribution on the "mission-driven" vs. "leader-driven" follower motivation (vs. action) of 400 members of 25 neighborhood associations. Debby Thomas' comparison of Rwandan and American followership styles introduces an important cross-cultural perspective in a study of 60 Rwandans and 57 Americans. In that article, Thomas examines the impact of key demographic variables, including age and educational level -- with some surprising results.

This is a remarkable collection of papers. It sounds its own clarion call announcing two important milestones: First, followers need not resort to revolution to emerge from the faceless mass; and, second, the field of followership, with a growing community of serious scholars, is not only alive and well, but experiencing a definite "adolescent growth spurt."