

STOCKHOLM SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

Master of Science in Business & Economics

Specialization in Management

Master Thesis, 30 ECTS

Fall 2012

# **Social constructions of followership**

**– An explorative case study**

<b>Authors:</b>	Felicia Lonnes (40358) Emma Åfeldt (21203)
<b>Supervisor:</b>	Philip Runsten
<b>Date:</b>	December 10, 2012

## Abstract

Compared to leadership, followership is an understudied topic. So far, several authors have described follower types, but few have engaged in studying the meaning of followership. The aim of this thesis is to fill this gap in research by exploring leaders' and followers' social constructions of followership. A qualitative methodology is adopted and interviews are conducted at two Swedish organizations, one health care company and one management consulting firm. First, social constructions are explored on a general level to gain an understanding of the meaning of followership. Second, we study whether the role of an individual and the organizational context have an impact on the social constructions of followership. We find that the term followership is complex and holds a multiplicity of meaning to leaders and followers. Moreover, our findings suggest that previous followership research has been too narrow, and that existing classifications of follower types do not fully capture the meaning and complexity inherent in the term. Additionally, we identify differences in leaders' and followers' constructions of followership and differences in constructions between the two organizations. This implies that both of these factors influence the social constructions of followership. Our study contributes to management literature by including leaders, in addition to followers, as constructors of followership. Thus, we provide a more holistic understanding of followership. Moreover, we take the role of an individual into consideration and identify specific components of the organizational context as influencing factors. Our findings offer insights to organizations in terms of understanding the meaning of followership and being a follower.

**Key words:** Followership, leadership, social construction, qualitative research

## Acknowledgements

We would like to thank our supervisor, Philip Runsten, for his valuable support, help and encouragement throughout the progress of writing this thesis.

Furthermore, we would like to thank the two companies that have been subject of our study. This thesis would not have been possible without their cooperation. Especially, we would like to thank all participating employees who have taken the time to talk to us and share their views on followership.

Stockholm, December 10, 2012



Felicia Lonnes



Emma Åfeldt

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## Abbreviations

HCC	Anonymized Health Care Company
CF	Anonymized Consulting Firm
HCCFx	Follower x at Health Care Company (x=1,2,3,...,n)
HCCLx	Leader x at Health Care Company (x=1,2,3,...,n)
CFFx	Follower x at Consulting Firm (x=1,2,3,...,n)
CFLx	Leader x at Consulting Firm (x=1,2,3,...,n)

## Definitions

<b>Leader</b>	An individual acting in a superior role.
<b>Follower</b>	An individual acting in a subordinate role.
<b>Leadership</b>	Behaviors of an individual acting in relation to a follower.
<b>Followership</b>	Behaviors of individuals acting in relation to a leader.

## 1 Introduction

The traditional organizational hierarchy has become more and more obsolete. Today's organizations are evolving into almost anything but pyramids with a top-down leadership, such as federations, networks, clusters and cross-functional teams (Bennis, 1999). This change has been caused by different factors. According to Bennis (1999), in a world with increasing technological and political complexity at an accelerating rate, there are fewer and fewer fields in which top-down leadership is sufficient. Moreover, a general decline in respect for authority supports the trend of diminishing organizational hierarchy. A flatter organization involves fewer levels of authority, shrinking numbers of middle-management positions and increased responsibility and decision-making authority of employees (Yeatts, Folts & Knapp, 2000). Therefore, the role of the follower is becoming more important. Additionally, the technological development in terms of the Internet has enabled followers to access information more easily. This has reduced followers' dependency on leaders, as an exclusive source of information (Brown, 2003). According to Brown (2003), leaders can therefore "no longer expect to be followed blindly by their now well-informed, more skeptical ranks" (Brown, 2003, p. 68). The advent of the information age has thus increased the need for more flexible leader-follower relationships. Furthermore, as the cost of intellectual capital has increased (Bjugstad, Thach, Thompson, & Morris, 2006), it is essential for organizations to develop followers' skills. If organizations fail to do so, their workforces may not be competitive in the future and organizations risk losing their competitive edge. Driven by these changes in the workplace, it has become ever more important to examine followership in more depth (Bjugstad et al., 2006). Moreover, since organizations pursue ways to select, train, and lead followers in order to achieve maximum productivity, research on followership and followers is necessary as a basis for this.

According to Collinson (2006), "it is often stated that the essence of leadership is followership and that without followers there can be no leaders" (Collinson, 2006, p. 179). Yet, in contrast to the research on leadership, followership is an understudied discipline (Collinson, 2006; Bjugstad et al., 2006; Bennis, 2010; Baker, 2007; Crossman & Crossman, 2011; Lundin & Lancaster, 1990; Kelley, 1988; Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2001; Mushonga & Torrance, 2008). This is not only evident in academia but even more in the mainstream business world (Bjugstad et al., 2006). When comparing followership literature to leadership literature, one can note that pure followership literature is still in its infancy (Crossman & Crossman, 2011). In 2006, Baker conducted a search on followership research in 26 electronic databases (Baker, 2006, in Baker, 2007). Combined, the databases displayed around 480 citations for the period 1928 to 2004 (Baker, 2006, in Baker, 2007). However, only "about half of the citations were relevant to



the field of management” (Baker, 2007, p. 50). Moreover, a great majority of the citations were written by American authors about American organizations. Additionally, Bjugstad et al. (2006) conducted a book search on Amazon.com and found the ratio of leadership to followership books to be 120:1. Considering that leadership and followership is a unity (Hollander, 1992), the lack of research on followership relative to leadership is striking. Moreover, the strong Anglo-Saxon focus on followership research might have an effect on the findings and their generalizability.

There are several reasons for why there is so little research on followership. First of all, there is a general mistaken belief that leadership is more important than followership (Bjugstad et al., 2006). This belief is grounded in the assumption that a good follower does what he or she is being told by the leader. Therefore, achieving the task is viewed as the result of good leadership and not good followership (Bjugstad et al., 2006). Meindl and Ehrlich (1987) argue that this overemphasis on leaders and leadership is a romanticized view on leadership, as the leader is viewed as the premier force in the organization. In line with this, Shamir (2007, in Shamir, Pillai, Bligh & Uhl-Bien, 2007) states that most leadership theories and studies have tended to emphasize the personal background, personality traits, perceptions and actions of leaders. Followers however have been viewed “as recipients or moderators of the leader’s influence, and as vehicles for the actualization of leader’s vision, mission or goals” (Shamir, 2007, in Shamir et al., 2007, p. x). Another reason for research not being focused on followership is that the terms follower and followership are stigmatized (Bjugstad et al. 2006; Lee, 1991). The terms are often linked to negative words like passive, weak, and obedient. Therefore, individuals try to avoid being categorized as followers (Bjugstad et al., 2006).

## 1.1 Problem

Even though followership research has been increasing over the past years, the body of followership research is still limited (Bennis, 2010; Schyns & Felfe, 2006). Several authors within followership literature have focused on exploring different follower types, such as exemplary, courageous, and super followers (e.g. Chaleff, 2003; Kelley, 1988; Steger, Manners & Zimmerer, 1982). However, so far few authors have been engaged in studying the meaning of followership (Crossman & Crossman, 2011). We continue to lack especially empirical evidence regarding how individuals view followership in organizational contexts (Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007, in Shamir et al. 2007). We know little about social constructions of followership, and the factors influencing the constructions. Yet, understanding the meaning of followership and the variables influencing it is highly important in order to advance the followership literature. This would not only complement existing literature on follower types and

behaviors, but it would also provide cues on the enactment of followership (Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007, in Shamir et al. 2007).

In a first study by Carsten, Uhl-Bien, West, Patera, and McGregor (2010), the authors examine how followers socially construct followership in order to understand the meaning of followership. By using a follower activity scale, the authors classify followers' constructions into passive, active, or proactive (Carsten et al., 2010). Thereby, Carsten et al. (2010) assume that the constructions of individuals are coherent. Moreover, Carsten et al. (2010) limit their study to followers' constructions of followership. However, since followership is a two part relationship between leaders and followers (e.g. Shamir, 2007, in Shamir et al. 2007; Goffee & Jones, 2009; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Lord, Brown & Freiberg, 1999), it is important to analyze how both leaders and followers socially construct followership. Besides, as Crossman and Crossman (2011) point out, social constructions are likely to differ "depending upon whether followership was approached from the perspective of a leader or a follower" (Crossman & Crossman, 2011, p. 483). Therefore, analyzing whether there are differences in followers' and leaders' constructions of followership represents a gap in existing research.

The organizational context is another factor that might influence social constructions (Carsten et al., 2010; Meindl, 1995). Carsten et al. (2010) acknowledge this factor in their study, yet they conclude that no significant differences in social constructions exist across organizational level or industry (Carsten et al., 2010, p. 551-552). However, since this result relates to one study within the topic of social construction of followership, it is relevant to complement this research by further investigating whether the organizational context has an impact on the constructions.

## **1.2 Purpose**

The aim of this thesis is to contribute to the existing body of followership literature, and to fill the above mentioned gaps in literature. In order to do this, we want to explore what followership means to individuals in organizations and investigate factors influencing the constructions of followership. We will extend the study by Carsten et al. (2010) by exploring whether there are differences between leaders' and followers' social constructions of followership and whether the organizational context has an impact on the social constructions of followership.

This study contributes to the "reversal of the lenses" (Shamir, 2007, p. xxi, in Shamir et al. 2007) in leadership research, as the focus lies on the follower role and its meaning to followers and leaders.

Moreover, we also challenge existing research on followership by exploring the nature of followership as a socially constructed phenomenon.

### 1.3 Research question

The previous considerations lead us to our two overarching research questions.

1. *What are leaders' and followers' social constructions of followership?*
2. *What factors influence the social constructions of leaders and followers?*

The first question aims at finding the meanings that leaders and followers associate with followership and analyze them in depth. Moreover, we want to look at constructions of individuals in greater detail and explore whether individuals provide a coherent construction of followership. The second question aims at exploring the factors that influence the constructions. In particular we want to analyze, whether and in what way the role of the individual and the context of the organization influence the constructions. Therefore, the second research question can be further broken down into two sub-questions.

- a) *Does the role of the individual influence the social constructions of followership?*
- b) *Does the organizational context influence the social constructions of followership and in particular which components can be identified?*

### 1.4 Disposition

In the following part, we will provide a brief summary of the structure of this thesis.

#### *Chapter 2: Theoretical framework*

The theoretical framework will follow the introduction. In this chapter we will describe relevant theory and the underlying standpoints of our thesis.

#### *Chapter 3: Methodology*

In the third chapter, we will present the methodology. This section will cover the research approach, case selection and presentation, data documentation, as well as the method of data coding and the analysis.

*Chapter 4: Empirics*

In this chapter, we will present the empirical findings of the thesis. This section is structured according to our research questions. First, we will outline the findings regarding the meaning of followership. Second, we will present our findings regarding the influencing factors of an individual's role and the organizational context.

*Chapter 5: Analysis*

In the fifth chapter, we will analyze our findings by using the theory presented in the theoretical framework.

*Chapter 6: Discussion*

In the sixth chapter, we will compare the different influencing factors and present additional factors based in theory. Moreover, we will discuss the enactment of followership.

*Chapter 7: Conclusion*

In this chapter, a conclusion of the results, the theoretical and managerial implications, and an overview of possible limitations will be given. We will end our thesis with an outlook on future followership research.

## **2 Theoretical framework**

In the following chapter, we will present the theoretical framework of our study. In the first part, we will provide a brief literature review by presenting follower roles in leadership literature and relevant follower types in followership literature. In the second part, we will present the theoretical foundation of our thesis by establishing our view on leadership and followership. Moreover, we will present social construction as an underlying perspective to study the meaning of followership.

### **2.1 Literature review**

The reason to include a brief literature review is to provide a view on how followership has evolved from leadership literature. We will therefore outline the different roles that followers have occupied in leadership literature. Moreover, it is a way to present the most relevant followership literature to our study by comparing different follower types.

### **2.1.1 Perspectives on followers in leadership literature**

Shamir (2007, in Shamir et al., 2007) is one of the first authors to present a comprehensive overview of follower roles in leadership literature. Therefore, we will draw on his analysis to outline the development of followers in leadership literature. According to Shamir (2007, in Shamir et al., 2007), five roles of followers can be identified in existing leadership literature: followers as recipients of the leader's influence, followers as moderators of the leader's influence, followers as substitutes for leadership, followers as constructors of leadership, and followers as leaders.

#### **Followers as recipients of the leader's influence**

Traditional leadership theories focus on the leader and emphasize the personal background, characteristics and actions of the leader, while followers are considered as recipients of leader's influence (Shamir 2007, in Shamir et al. 2007; Hosking, 1988). Leadership is thus seen as "a one-way event – the leader affects the subordinates" (Northouse, 2004, p.113). The leader's traits and behaviors are recognized as independent variables, whereas follower's perceptions and behaviors are considered as dependent variables (Shamir 2007, in Shamir et al. 2007). This traditional view is shared by early and also more recent theories, such as transformational and charismatic leadership (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999; Shamir, House & Arthur, 1993). According to this line of research, followers do not play an active role in the leadership process but are viewed as "an empty vessel waiting to be led, or even transformed, by the leader" (Goffee & Jones, 2009, p.148).

#### **Followers as moderators of the leaders' impact**

Other theories argue instead that followers' characteristics moderate leader's influence on followers (Shamir 2007, in Shamir et al. 2007). According to these theories, i.e. contingency theories, the leader's effect on followers is influenced by followers' characteristics. Hersey and Blanchard (1988), for instance, claim in their situational leadership theory that effective leadership is achieved by selecting a leadership style that fits a follower's maturity level (ability and motivation). Moreover, also Vroom and Yetton (1973) acknowledge the fact that followers' characteristics moderate leaders influence on followers. They claim that the effectiveness of a participative leadership style is dependent on the followers' knowledge about decision issues and whether they share the same values as the leader (Vroom and Yetton, 1973). According to this line of research, followers are both recipients of leaders influence, as well as moderators of the leader's impact. However, in line with the traditional view, this theory also "prioritizes leaders" (Collinson, 2005, p. 1424) and addresses followers only in relation to their responsiveness to certain leader behaviors.

**Followers as substitutes for leadership**

According to Shamir (2007, in Shamir et al. 2007), the substitutes for leadership theory gives followers “a potentially more dominant role” (Shamir, 2007, in Shamir et al. 2007, p. xiv) than acknowledged by previous research. This line of theory suggests that there are specific factors or conditions that can negate the necessity for leadership. For instance, certain follower characteristics, such as high motivation and ability, solid understanding of norms that support task performance, etc. might neutralize the leader’s effect on followers. This theory is therefore viewed as more radical than the previous ones (Shamir 2007, in Shamir et al. 2007), since leadership is seen as unnecessary in certain contexts.

**Followers as constructors of leadership**

Followers are given a much more central role in the theories that present leadership as socially constructed. Among others, Meindl, Ehrlich and Dukerich (1985) and Meindl and Ehrlich (1987), offer a cognitive explanation for the construction of leadership. According to Meindl and his colleagues, leadership is a perception resulting from organizational members’ bias to comprehend “important but causally (...) ambiguous organizational events and occurrences in terms of leadership” (Meindl et al., 1985, p. 80). Organizational members ascribe power and causality to leaders and therefore achieve an understanding and control over their environment (Meindl et al., 1985). Meindl et al. (1985) refer to this reasoning as the romance of leadership. Leadership is thus largely influenced by followers’ constructions of leadership (Meindl et al., 1985). By focusing on the follower as constructor of leadership, Meindl et al. (1985) and Meindl and Ehrlich (1987) challenge previous leadership literature, which mostly concentrates on idealized leaders. Their work can be seen as follower-centric, as it attempts to counteract some of the myths of heroic leaders by concentrating on followers (Meindl et al., 1985; Meindl & Ehrlich, 1987).

**Followers as leaders: Shared leadership**

Theories of “shared, distributed, or dispersed leadership” (Shamir 2007, in Shamir et al. 2007, p. xvii) offer an even more radical perspective in terms of leaders and followers, as they question the distinction between leaders and followers (Shamir 2007, in Shamir et al. 2007). The self-leadership approach (Manz & Sims, 1980) and self-managing work teams (Manz & Sims, 1987) are grounded in the substitutes for leadership theory. Both approaches view leadership as a function or an activity that can be shared among members. The theories argue that there should be no fixed roles of followers and leaders. Instead, everyone should be regarded as both leader and follower (Shamir 2007, in Shamir et al. 2007).

In fact, one could argue that the shared leadership approach is neither leader-centric nor follower-centric, as it rejects the distinction between leaders and followers. Yet, as followers are assigned central and active roles, shared leadership theories are rather follower- than leader-centric (Shamir 2007, in Shamir et al. 2007).

The discussion above describes how the role of the follower develops from passive, as a recipient of the leader's influence, to a central role in the leadership relationship. The increasing recognition of followers as an active part in the leadership equation has encouraged and nurtured followership research on its own.

### 2.1.2 Follower types in followership literature

Over the past years we can see an effort in research to explore "leadership's underappreciated complement in all its complexity" (Bennis, 2010, p. 3). While leadership research is rooted in top level leaders, followership research originates at mid-manager levels (Crossman & Crossman, 2011). The work of Kelley (1988) and Chaleff (2003) is seen as groundbreaking literature for mid-manager training and both are considered as primary works of followership research, especially in the public press (Crossman & Crossman, 2011; Baker, 2007). In general, it can be noted that much followership research has focused on describing follower types, behaviors and characteristics. In the following, we will therefore present the most relevant followership literature to this thesis by giving an overview of follower types that have been presented by research so far.

<b>Authors</b>	Zaleznik (1965)	Steger et al. (1982)	Kelley (1988)	Chaleff (2003, 2008)	Kellerman (2008)	Carsten et al. (2010)
<b>Follower types</b>	Withdrawn Masochistic Compulsive Impulsive	Apathetic Bureaucrat Game player Donkey Kamikaze Deviant Artist Achiever Super follower	Sheep Yes people Survivor Alienated follower Effective follower	Resource Individualist Implementer Partner	Isolaters Bystanders Participants Activists Diehards	Passive Active Proactive

**Table 1 – Overview of follower types (based on Crossman & Crossman, 2011)**

Zaleznik (1965) offers one of the earliest typologies on subordinate behavior. He classifies subordinates according to two sets of variables, dominance versus submission, and activity versus passivity. Dominant

followers are described as individuals who want to control their superiors, while submissive followers prefer to be controlled by their leaders (Zaleznik, 1965). Along those dimensions, followers are classified into four different groups: *impulsive followers*, who are rebellious, spontaneous, and courageous, *compulsive followers* who are controlling but passive, *masochistic followers* who want to submit to the control of the leader, and *withdrawn followers* who care little about their work (Baker, 2007). Zaleznik (1965) suggests that leaders most often hold power over subordinates who submit themselves to the leader. However, there are also some anti-authoritarian followers who aim at dominating the relationship.

Steger et al. (1982) on the other hand, ground their theory more in self-interested motives and build their follower types on the basis of two dimensions, the desire for self-enhancement and the desire for self-protection. As a result, Steger et al. (1982) propose nine follower types dependent on followers' high, medium or low attraction to each dimension. Steger et al. (1982) view the hierarchical structure as given, while power depends on how much freedom the manager is given to reward or punish subordinates. In their view, power is a managerial tool that is not shared with followers (Baker, 2007). The manager employs different kinds of power (i.e. direct power, supportive power, manipulative power) depending on the follower's style in order to motivate followers (Baker, 2007).

Kelley (1988) examines the behaviors of followers that lead to effective or ineffective followership by using a two-by-two matrix, with the two underlying dimensions of dependency versus critical thinking, and activity versus passivity. If followers consider the impact of their actions, are willing to be creative and innovative, and offer criticism, they are identified as independent, critical thinkers. Dependent, uncritical thinkers, on the other hand, simply do what they are told and agree with the leader's thinking. The dimension activity versus passivity determines the follower's ownership feeling. An active follower takes initiative in decision making, while a passive follower is only marginally involved and does what he or she is being told to do (Kelley, 1988). On the basis of these dimensions, Kelley (1988) proposes a subset of five follower types: *effective followers* as independent and critical thinkers, *alienated followers* as passive but independent and critical thinkers, *sheep* as passive and dependent and uncritical thinkers, *yes people* as active but dependent and uncritical thinkers, and *survivors* who show some of the characteristics of the other four (Kelley, 1988). The *effective follower* is the most desirable follower type and demonstrates several important qualities. According to Kelley (1988), effective followers manage themselves well and are committed to something outside themselves, such as the organization.



Moreover, they possess skills that are useful to the organization and they are credible, honest and courageous (Kelley, 1988). Below, Kelley's (1988) matrix is visualized.

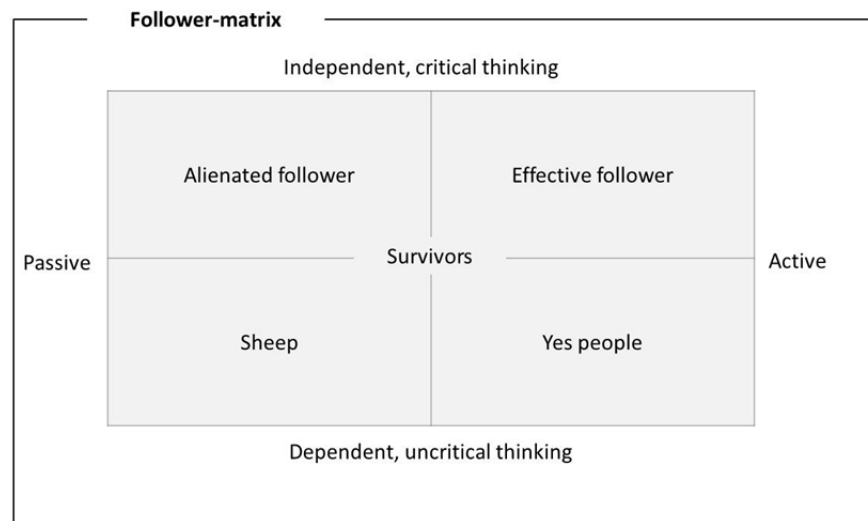


Figure 1 – Follower matrix (Kelley, 1988)

In his first work on followers, Chaleff (2003) does not categorize followers as effective or ineffective followers but proposes five components of courageous followership that focus upon ideal followers' behaviors. According to Chaleff (2003), these behaviors are:

- (i) The courage to take responsibility for themselves and the organization
- (ii) The courage to serve a leader
- (iii) The courage to challenge by expressing discomfort they feel
- (iv) The courage to fully take part in transformation and change processes
- (v) The courage to leave the organization

Later on, Chaleff refines his work into two key behaviors for effective followership: the courage to support and the courage to challenge the leader's behavior (Chaleff, 2008). Based on this, Chaleff (2008) also classifies followers into the following four types: *resource*, *individualist*, *implementer*, and *partner*. The resource follower shows low support and low challenge and only does enough to maintain his or her position. The individualist demonstrates low support and high challenge. This type of follower speaks up but is perceived as a contrarian. The implementer expresses high support and low challenge against the leader. While leaders value this style, it is more risky as the follower does not speak up against mistakes. The partner shows high support and simultaneously high challenge. This type of follower takes full responsibility for his or her own behavior as well as the leader's behavior (Chaleff, 2008).

Kellerman (2007, 2008) on the other hand, concentrates only on one single metric to distinguish between different types of followers, which is the level of engagement. She does however not determine how followers feel about their leaders. The continuum of engagement ranges from “feeling and doing absolutely nothing on the one end to being passionately committed and deeply involved on the other” (Kellerman, 2008, p. 85). On the basis of this, Kellerman (2008) categorizes followers into five different types: *isolaters*, *bystanders*, *participants*, *activists*, and *diehards*. Isolaters are completely detached and do not care about their leaders. In this way, isolaters differ from the other four types, as all of them are somehow involved (Kellerman, 2008). On the surface, bystanders appear to be similarly detached, however, they have opinions and attitudes that they simply choose not to express. Participants are engaged in some way and they either clearly support or oppose the leader. Activists are engaged and energetic as they are heavily invested in the people and the process. Diehards are the most engaged followers. They are deeply devoted to their leaders, or in contrast, do everything to remove them (Kellerman, 2008).

Carsten et al. (2010) conduct a study exploring how individuals socially construct their roles as followers, thus taking a social constructionist approach. Based on their data, Carsten et al. (2010) find that followers construct followership around passivity, activity and proactivity. As constructions give cues on the enactment, Carsten et al. (2010) suggest that three different follower types exist: *passive*, *active* and *proactive* followers. Passive followers construct followership around obedience and deference, whereas active followers emphasize the importance of expressing their own opinions and offering input to the leaders. Proactive followers highlight taking initiative, offering advice and feedback, as well as constructively challenging the leader. The proactive follower differs from the active one as a proactive follower offers feedback or challenges his or her leader before he or she is asked to do so. An active follower on the other hand offers input when he or she is asked for it by his or her leader (Carsten et al., 2010).

While the different typologies (summarized in Table 1) vary, they also show some similarities (Crossman & Crossman, 2011). Less desirable behaviors with low levels of commitment and effectiveness are grouped at one end of the spectrum. The types withdrawn (Zaleznik, 1965), apathetic (Steger et al., 1982), yes people and sheep (Kelly, 1988), isolaters and bystanders (Kellerman, 2008), as well as passive followers (Carsten et al., 2010) illustrate that. At the same time, ideal types with a high level of commitment are grouped at the other end of the spectrum. These types include super followers and achievers (Steger et al., 1982), effective followers (Kelly, 1988), partners (Chaleff, 2008), diehards and

activists (Kellerman, 2008) and proactive followers (Carsten et al., 2010). In between these extremes one can find neutral follower types, such as survivors, individualists, donkeys, game players, and active followers (Kelly, 1988; Chaleff, 2008; Steger et al., 1982; Carsten et al., 2010).

The typologies all contribute to followership literature, and especially Kelley (1988) and Chaleff (2003, 2008) gained widespread popular acceptance for their contribution. However, Kelley (1988) and Chaleff (2003) have also been criticized for not grounding their assumptions on empirical research (Baker, 2007). Carsten et al. (2010) base their classifications of follower types on empirical data, and more specifically on followers' social constructions of followership. As this approach is closest to the aim of our research, to explore leaders' and followers' social constructions of followership, we will use their classifications (passive, active and proactive) to classify our data.

## **2.2. Theoretical foundation**

In the following, we will present the theoretical foundation of our thesis by first establishing our view on leadership and followership. Second, we will present theory on social construction, which is our approach towards studying the phenomenon of followership. Thereafter, we will describe previous studies of social construction of leadership and followership. Finally, we will present a model visualizing the social construction process of followership.

### **2.2.1 Leadership and followership as a process**

In this thesis, we take the standpoint that leadership is a social relationship that is jointly produced by leaders and followers (e.g. Hollander, 1992; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Marion & Uhl-Bien, 2001; Shamir et al., 2007). Consequently, leadership emerges in the interaction between followers and leaders. Moreover, leaders and followers are viewed as roles since, for instance, leaders are not "a distinct class of human beings" (Heller & van Til, 1982, p. 406).

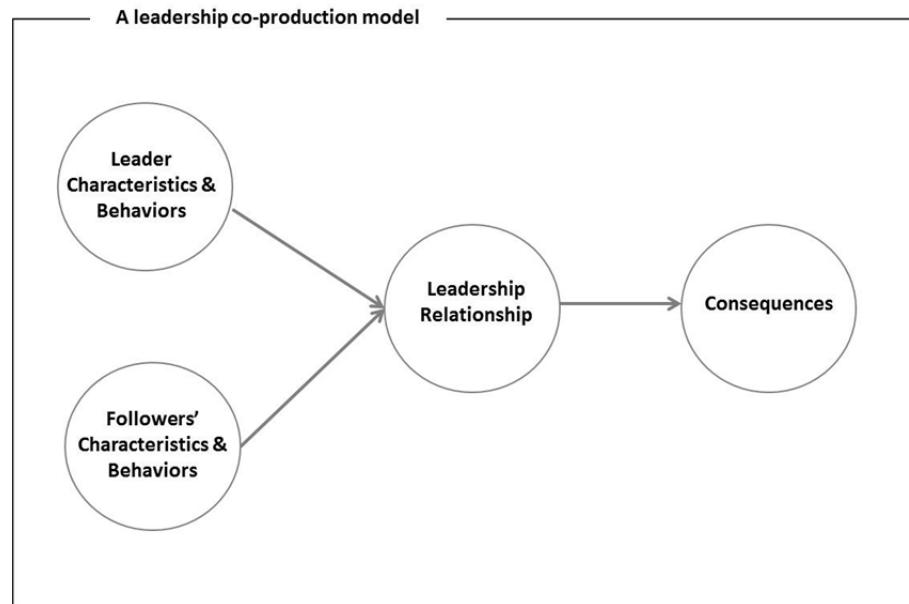


Figure 2 – A leadership co-production model (Shamir, 2007, in Shamir et al. 2007)

The model proposed by Shamir (2007, in Shamir et al. 2007) is balanced and “includes both leaders and followers as causal agents” (Shamir, 2007, in Shamir et al. 2007, p. xx). Moreover, it establishes leadership as a relationship. Accordingly, the characteristics and behaviors of both leaders and followers influence the nature of this relationship and its consequences (Shamir, 2007 in Shamir et al., 2007). Hence, in this model both leaders and followers are viewed as co-producers of leadership (Shamir, 2007, in Shamir et al., 2007). Leadership and followership are linked concepts, and neither can be comprehended without the other (Heller and van Til, 1982). Therefore, followership, as being the counterpart of leadership, can be understood as a process as well. In the followership relation, just as in the leadership process, followers and leaders are viewed as co-producers of followership, as both their characteristics and behaviors influence the followership relationship process.

### 2.2.2 Social constructionist perspective

This thesis takes a social constructionist approach towards followership. Therefore, we base our thesis in the work of Meindl and the notion of the romance of leadership (Meindl et al., 1985). The romance of leadership describes leadership as a social construction process among followers (Meindl et al., 1985). It “is about the thoughts of followers: how leaders are constructed and represented in their thought systems” (Meindl, 1995, p. 330). Therefore, Meindl’s notion moves away from the focus on the actual personalities of the leader and instead focuses on the personalities of leaders as constructed by followers (Meindl, 1995). Important within the romance of leadership is that leadership is an emergent

phenomenon. It is considered to have emerged “when followers construct their experiences in terms of leadership concepts - that is, when they interpret their relationship as having a leadership-followership dimension” (Meindl, 1995, p. 332). Within this line of thought, leadership is in the eyes of the beholder as followers and “not the leader -and not researchers- define it” (Meindl, 1995, p. 331). In this thesis, in line with Uhl-Bien and Pillai (2007, in Shamir et al., 2007), we propose that in the same way as leadership is in the eyes of the beholder in the notion of romance of leadership, so is followership.

According to Meindl (1995), the social constructions of leadership are generated through processes at the individual level and at the group level. These two processes combined form leadership from the perspectives of the followers (Meindl, 1995). On the individual level there are input variables that can cause differences in individuals’ constructions of leadership (Meindl, 1995). According to Meindl (1995) these can be divided into those that are associated with individual followers, and those that originate from the social-organizational contexts in which the followers are embedded. Social processes within groups of followers might influence the social constructions of individual members (Meindl, 1995), as they “cause the constructions of individual members to become a collaborative, negotiated, intersubjectively shared system of leadership concepts that link and unify followers within the group” (Meindl, 1995, p. 336). These processes arise out of the interactions among fellow group members (Meindl, 1995). Meindl (1995) discusses group process in the social construction of leadership, however, the same line of reasoning holds true for the social construction of followership. Even though we recognize that group level processes together with individual level processes form social constructions of followership, in this thesis our focus lies on the individual level processes due to the limited scope of the thesis.

Carsten et al. (2010) discuss in their article that social constructions of followership are influenced by schema and context. Schemas are knowledge structures (Shondrick and Lord, 2010) that provide an underlying structure of the meaning of followership (Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007 in Shamir et al., 2007). Schemas persist over time and shape the perceptions, interpretations and behaviors of individuals. They are developed through socialization and past experiences and are stored in memory (Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007 in Shamir et al., 2007). Followership schemas are activated when followers interact with a person in a leadership position and/or with other followers (Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007 in Shamir et al., 2007). According to Carsten et al. (2010), schemas provide a general understanding of followership behavior. However, the context influences the constructions around specific behaviors that are acceptable or appropriate in a particular environment. Therefore, when speaking about the social constructions of

followership, individuals disclose their underlying schema and parts of the context that make schematic traits and behaviors more or less appropriate (Carsten et al., 2010).

### ***2.2.2.1 Components of the organizational context***

As argued in the previous section, the context has an impact on followers' social constructions of leadership (Meindl, 1995) and followership (Carsten et al., 2010). In line with this, also Bresnen (1995) argues in his study on social constructions of leadership that the context has an impact on how managers socially construct leadership. Porter and McLaughlin (2006, p. 559) state that "(l)eadership in organizations does not take place in a vacuum [but that it] (...) takes place in organizational contexts". In the same fashion, we argue that leaders and followers in our study are embedded in a context.

In line with the study by Carsten et al. (2010), the context in our study is limited to the organizational context. According to Carsten et al. (2010), certain components of the context are likely to have more influence on social constructions of followership than others. Two such variables are the organizational climate and the leadership style (Carsten et al., 2010). Regarding leadership style, the authors distinguish between an authoritarian and an empowering/supportive leadership style. According to Carsten et al. (2010), an authoritarian leadership style is characterized by obedience and authority, whereas an empowering leadership style gives autonomy and encouragement to followers. When it comes to organizational climate, the researchers distinguish between a hierarchical/bureaucratic work context and an empowering work climate (Carsten et al., 2010). A hierarchical work context places importance on a command and control working relationship (Carsten et al., 2010), whereas an empowering work climate encourages individuals to be proactive and partake in decision making (Carsten et al., 2010).

Among other components, Porter and McLaughlin (2006) recognize culture as a part of the organizational context. Moreover, the authors also recognize the state/condition of an organization as a part of the organizational context, which defines whether the organization is in a state of stability or change and/or crisis (Porter & McLaughlin, 2006). Additionally, in a qualitative study investigating conceptions of leadership and effective and ineffective leadership in the British Police Service, Bryman, Stephens and à Campo (1996) argue that the context, in terms of the specific preoccupations of police officers and the unique culture and structure of the police service, is dominant in officers' thinking when replying to interview questions in their own terms. According to Porter and McLaughlin (2006), the structure of the organization refers to the degree of formalization and centralization and the hierarchical levels of individuals.

### 2.2.3 Previous studies within the field of social construction

The study of Carsten et al. (2010) is inspired by a study made by Bresnen (1995) within leadership research. In this study, Bresnen (1995) explores the nature of leadership as a social attribution and socially constructed phenomenon. The author aims to explore the meanings conveyed by the term leadership. Bresnen (1995) adopts a qualitative methodology and interviews practicing managers in the construction industry. Although Bresnen (1995) identifies some similarities in the way that the managers conceptualize leadership, he also finds many differences in how these managers interpret and describe leadership. This finding displays the great variety of meanings infused with the term. Due to the complexity and diversity of social constructions of leadership, Bresnen (1995) argues that summarizing leadership, by simply “mapping on” (Bresnen, 1995, p. 509) an externally imposed and two-dimensional framework to assess leaders’ or followers’ behaviors, is inappropriate.

Similar to Bresnen (1995), Carsten et al. (2010) apply a qualitative methodology to investigate the meaning of followership to those acting in a follower role. The authors conduct semi-structured interviews with participants working in a variety of industries in the U.S. and Canada. Carsten et al. (2010) identify 12 first-order categories that describe the personal qualities and behaviors that the interviewees ascribe to effective followers (see table 2 below).

Code	Definition
Team player	Willingness to work in cooperation with others. Emphasizing collective effort and cooperation.
Positive attitude	Individual is inclined to approve, help, or support. Emphasizing what is laudable, hopeful, or good.
Initiative/proactive behavior	Willingness to identify, confront, and solve problems or issues; recognize and act on initiatives without deferring to the leader.
Expressing opinions	Individual makes known his/her opinions and feelings to the leader and the group. Constructively challenges leader’s ideas, decisions, initiatives, etc.
Flexibility/openness	Willingness to adapt to and be malleable. Open to new ideas or experiences.
Obedience/deference	Not participating readily or actively. Not involving visible reaction or active participation. Going along with others; submitting without resistance.
Communication skills	Able to exchange ideas and thoughts. Understanding audience and framing arguments accordingly.
Loyalty/support	Faithful adherence to the leader and support for his/her ideas.
Responsible/dependable	Capable of being depended on; worthy of trust; reliable.

Taking ownership	Emphasis on taking full responsibility for, and having power and influence over, any part of an individual's job.
Mission conscience	Being mindful of the overarching company goals and direction. Focusing on the bigger picture and greater purpose of the work.
Integrity	Adherence to moral and ethical principles; soundness of moral character; honesty.

**Table 2 – Overview of coding categories and definitions (Carsten et al., 2010)**

Furthermore, Carsten et al. (2010) identify four first-order categories describing significant contextual variables influencing the social constructions. In addition to the first-order categories, each case is assigned a rating of follower passivity/activity based on the interview responses of each participant. Similar to Bresnen (1995), who finds a multiplicity of meaning within social constructions of leadership, Carsten et al. (2010) find variations in the followers' social constructions of followership. Just over a third of their respondents reveal social constructions of followership that are passive in nature. The second group, which is slightly smaller than the passive one, consists of respondents that possess active social constructions of followership. The third group of respondents, the smallest one, reveals social constructions that are proactive in nature. An additional analysis shows that individuals with passive, active, and proactive social constructions appear to be evenly spread across organizational levels and industries (Carsten et al., 2010). Furthermore, the researchers also explore whether particular aspects of the organizational context influence followers' social constructions and their behavior. Based on their data, the researchers can see that the context in terms of leadership style and organizational climate has an impact on the social constructions and moreover that it has an impact on the behavior of the follower in question (Carsten et al., 2010).

### **2.3 A model of the social construction of followership**

The model below (Figure 2) illustrates our understanding of how an individual's social construction of followership is formed. As stated earlier in the theoretical framework, the social construction of followership is a product of the schema and the organizational context. While the schema forms a general perception of what followership is, the organizational context influences the constructions around followership behaviors that are appropriate in a specific environment (Carsten et al., 2010). Since schemas are knowledge structures that are stored in the memory of an individual, they are placed at the top of the figure, closest to the individual. As leaders are included as constructors of followership in this study, we reason in line with Carsten et al. (2010) and Crossman and Crossman (2011) that there might be differences in how leaders and followers socially construct followership. Therefore, in addition



to the organizational context, the role of an individual becomes a relevant influencing factor. Since we reason that the role is closer to the individual than the organizational context, this factor is placed in between the schema and the organizational context. Finally, at the bottom of the model, and as a result of the schema being influenced by the role and the organizational context, is an individual's social construction of followership.

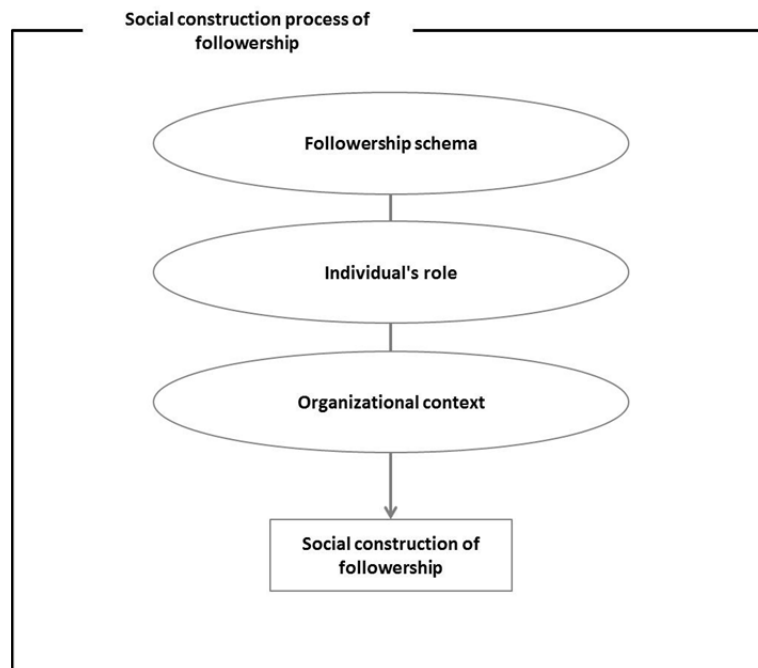


Figure 3 – Social construction process of followership

### 3 Methodology

In this chapter, we will outline our research methodology. We will begin by explaining our research approach, consisting of qualitative research and a case study approach. Thereafter, we will describe the company selection, and briefly present the companies that are subjects of our study. Next, we will outline the data collection, documentation and coding process. Finally, we will briefly describe the analysis of our data.

#### 3.1 Qualitative research

In our thesis a qualitative methodology with an abductive approach is used in order to capture followers' and leaders' social constructions of followership.

The approach of qualitative research is especially helpful in the “exploratory phases of researching a topic area” (Conger, 1998, p. 108), in which followership is still to be found. Additionally, it allows achieving a more grounded understanding of what followership means to leaders and followers in organizations. Moreover, the use of interviews as a primary source is a “highly efficient way to gather rich, empirical data” (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Thus, similar to existing studies by Bresnen (1995) and Carsten et al. (2010) we adopt a qualitative methodology.

Abduction is the “process by which a researcher moves between induction and deduction while practicing the constant comparative method” (Suddaby, 2006, p. 639). Inductive analysis is when the researcher aims to derive concepts, themes or a model through interpretations of the raw data (Thomas, 2006). In a deductive analysis on the other hand, the researcher aims at testing whether data are consistent with earlier assumptions, hypotheses or theories identified or constructed by an investigator (Thomas, 2006). Adduction takes the advantage of both deduction and induction, as it moves between the two (Suddaby, 2006). It is therefore the source for new ideas and “new conceptual views of the empirical world” (Suddaby, 2006, p. 639), and it is well applicable for our study.

### **3.2 Case study**

In this thesis, we use the case study approach as a primary research method. The case study approach offers several advantages to answer our research questions. First of all, it allows studying a contemporary phenomenon, the social construction of followership, in its natural setting (Benbasat, Goldstein & Mead, 1987; Yin, 2003). Second, “the case method allows the researcher to answer “how” and “why” questions” (Benbasat et al., 1987, p. 370; Yin, 2003) to understand the nature and complexity of the complete phenomenon, which is helpful when analyzing factors that influence the constructions of followership. Third and most important, the case study method is appropriate when few previous studies have been made in that research area (Benbasat et al., 1987; Miles & Huberman, 1994). As empirical research on followership in general is limited (Crossman & Crossman, 2011) and especially narrow when it comes to constructions of followership (Carsten et al., 2010), case studies are more suitable for exploring and developing hypotheses.

In the following, we will outline the case design that we use and present the criteria for selecting the case studies of our thesis.

### 3.2.1 Case design

There are two types of case study designs, single and multiple case studies (Eisenhardt, 1989). This thesis follows the multiple case study approach by comparing two case studies. Multiple case studies are favorable when the research approach aims at building theory (Benbasat et al., 1987; Eisenhardt, 1989), which we are trying to accomplish with our study. Multiple cases typically yield “more robust” and “generalizable” theory, as propositions are “deeply grounded in varied empirical evidence” (Eisenhardt and Graebner, 2007, p. 27). By limiting our study to two cases, we are also able to analyze and describe the phenomenon of followership in great depth in two organizations (Darke, Shanks & Broadbent, 1998).

### 3.2.2 Case selection

To select suitable companies for our study, we formulated three selection criteria, according to which we restricted our search of possible target companies.

First, we limited our search to corporations based in Stockholm, Sweden, to be able to conduct face-to-face interviews. According to Denscombe (2000), physical presence is valuable in order to gain more detailed information from the respondents. Moreover, physical presence also ensures correct understanding of the answers, as the researcher can take advantage of social cues, such as voice, intonation and body language (Opdenakker, 2006; Denscombe, 2000).

Second, as we needed to conduct interviews in English, another important criterion was the interviewees’ ability and willingness to speak English.

Lastly, we believed that gaining sufficient access to organizations would be the biggest challenge. Therefore, we selected companies that were most positive and open towards our study.

Having these three criteria in mind, we started to contact a variety of companies in different industrial sectors through personal contacts. After being in closer contact with five companies in different sectors, we chose a health care company and a management consulting firm, as subjects of our study. These two companies were very positive towards working with us, and seemed to be most open for a close cooperation as well as being comfortable conducting interviews in English. As we were not looking at industry specific constructions of followership, the different sectors in which the companies operate were not considered as problematic.

### **3.2.3 Case presentation<sup>1</sup>**

In the following section, we will present the two companies that are subject of our study. Due to the necessity to anonymize the two organizations, the company within the health care industry will be referred to as Health Care Company or HCC. The company active in the management consulting industry will be referred to as Consulting Firm or CF.

#### ***3.2.3.1 Health Care Company (HCC)***

HCC is a Swedish health care company providing services, support and care for people with disabilities or social problems. The company also provides elder care and schools for pupils with special needs. The company operates both in Sweden and Norway, but the largest part of its business is in Sweden, where the company employs 6000 people. This study was limited to the employees at the headquarters of HCC, which is situated outside Stockholm and consists of 79 employees. The company, as it is today, was formed in 2004 through a merger of different businesses. In recent years, the company has been going through several changes. First, the company has experienced large growth since its formation, which continues until today. This has led to structural changes in the company. Second, the company has gone through a change of ownership. In spring 2010, a British investment company bought HCC. Before that, the company was owned by a Danish private equity firm for three years. After the change in ownership, the company has also experienced changes in the management team. As the British investment company took over HCC, they exchanged the CEO with an interim CEO from the British investment company, who was succeeded by the current CEO in February 2012. The changes in top management imply that within a little more than two years, some employees have been working under the command of three different CEOs. Along with the changes in the management team, the headquarters has also experienced turnover among its employees.

#### ***3.2.3.2 Consulting Firm (CF)***

CF is a consulting company based in Stockholm, which assists its clients in creating a strong company culture, formulating strategies and to make innovation an integrated part of the business. The company was founded in 2007 by four partners. Currently, CF employs 30 employees. It is structured into four different business areas and it operates in Sweden. Similar to other consulting companies, CF is owned by its partners. As the company is fairly young, it is still developing and growing. For instance, CF hired ten new consultants during the spring, which represents a strong increase in the company size. Due to

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<sup>1</sup> The information in this section was collected from our interviews and from the homepage of the respective company. Due to the request of being anonymous, we will however not provide the addresses of the companies' homepages.

its size and young age, CF is characterized by a flat organizational structure, which gives the employees freedom and responsibility in their work. The company has an entrepreneurial spirit and emphasizes self-leadership, which means that everyone in the company should strive for leading themselves and others, even if they do not hold a formal leader position. CF practices a version of shared leadership, which means that the CEO position is only a formal one. The decisions are taken jointly in the management team and the partner group.

### **3.3 Data collection**

In the following section, we will introduce how we collect our data. We will thereafter explain in more detail the interview protocol, the participants of our study as well as the interview setting.

#### **3.3.1 Semi-structured interviews**

As previously mentioned, the thesis is based on qualitative interviews that are semi-structured and focus on the respondents' personal associations and descriptions of followers' characteristics and behaviors. We use semi-structured interviews, as they allow more depth in comparison to closed question interviews (Keats, 2000). Additionally, the participants are able to show a great level of detail and provide in-depth explanation about their ideas of and associations with followership. Moreover, we are able to ask follow up questions and capture unexpected findings, yet, collecting the same general areas of information from each interviewee (Gillham, 2000).

#### **3.3.2 Interview protocol**

The interview protocol consists of four main parts with nine core questions. The first part of the protocol focuses on gathering general data about participants, such as their role in the organization, their tenure within the company and their background. During a pilot test, we recognized that participants were more confident to answer questions about followership, after shortly discussing leadership, since leadership is a concept more familiar to most respondents. Therefore, the protocol consists of two short questions about leadership in the second part. In the third part, the protocol focuses on the nine core questions about followership. We include a number of resembling questions in order to receive more comprehensive answers and to simplify answering the questions. The fourth part concludes with questions about the context of the organization and leadership processes. As both leaders and followers are interviewed, two different types of interview protocols are constructed. Followers are asked to answer questions from the perspective of an individual acting in a subordinate role, whereas leaders are

asked to answer the questions from the perspective of a leader acting in relation to a subordinate. The complete interview protocols are presented in Appendix A1 and A2.

### **3.3.3 Participants**

Interviews were conducted with a total of 20 people, of which thirteen participants are working at Health Care Company and seven are employed at Consulting Firm. Participants from Health Care Company were limited to the headquarters in Stockholm in order to reduce complexity and travelling time. As the goal of our study is to discover and analyze the meaning of followership from the perspective of both followers and leaders, about half of the participants (n=9) hold formal management positions and are considered as leaders in our study. We acknowledge that managers are not always leaders and subordinates are not always followers, (Bedeian & Hunt, 2006; Meindl, 1995), yet we selected this approach as a starting point towards a more holistic understanding of followership (Carsten et al., 2010). In order to obtain broad opinions and perspectives, we interviewed individuals with diverse backgrounds who come from different organizational levels (Bryman, 2004). We attempted to control for gender, and therefore the sample is split evenly between men and women. A complete list of the interviews is presented in Appendix B.

### **3.3.4 Interview setting**

All interviews, both at Health Care Company and Consulting Firm, were conducted through face-to-face meetings at the respective company's office. The interviews ranged from 25 minutes to an hour in length and were based on the above mentioned semi-structured interview protocols. Each respondent received a short standardized introduction about our study. Moreover, the respondents were promised anonymity.

As suggested by Eisenhardt (1989), we were both present in each interview, which enhanced the explorative potential and reduced the impact of individual biases (Voss, Tsikritsis & Frohlich, 2002). When conducting the interviews, we considered the interviewing skills recommended by Yin (1994, p. 56): "to ask good questions, to be a good listener, to be adaptive and flexible, to have a firm grasp of the issues being studied, and to be unbiased by preconceived notions".

Even though the interviews were conducted in English, a risk of possible non-conformity between participants' thoughts and their ability to express those thoughts (Alvesson, 2011) were limited by the possibility of switching to their mother-tongue Swedish if necessary.

### **3.4 Data documentation and coding**

In the following section, we will describe how we document and code our data for analysis.

#### **3.4.1 Data documentation**

The interviews are documented in several ways. We record all interviews by using the voice recording function of mobile phones, which allows storing the files digitally. In addition, notes are taken during the interviews and are stored in writing to complement our transcriptions. We transcribe immediately after performing the interviews to guarantee a simultaneous analysis.

#### **3.4.2 Coding**

A sequenced process of inductive and deductive analysis is used to code the interview data. According to Miles and Huberman (1994), this process strengthens the analysis.

The process begins with an inductive analysis, which follows the grounded theory approach. Major themes are discovered through the “analyst’s interactions with the data” (Patton, 2002, p. 453, in Carsten et al., 2010). According to Katz (1983), an inductive analysis enables the researcher to repeatedly generate and refine categories to develop a theory explaining a certain phenomenon. It must be noted that this method does not allow for a complete explanation of a phenomenon but provides a starting point from which we can begin to develop hypotheses regarding our research questions (Carsten et al., 2010).

The inductive analysis begins with the start of interviewing and concludes once all data is collected. During this process, we first review the collected data individually and identify preliminary emerging themes and categories. Then, we compare and discuss the themes and categories that we identify. In following meetings previous themes are reconsidered and their relevance to the new data is evaluated. After conducting the last interview, we use “open coding” in order to assign codes to the occurring themes in the data. According to Lee (1999), in open coding, “the researcher creates as many categories as needed to organize, explain, and assign empirical data to these categories in a coherent fashion” (Lee, 1999, p. 48). The coding process is conducted individually by both researchers and is combined later on, which according to Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 65) “is essential for studies with more than one researcher”. When disagreements occur, reasons for disagreement and interpretation of themes are discussed. Once all codes are generated, the codes are subsequently used to code all interview data.

In total we identify 42 different codes from the interviews. The codes describe characteristics, such as ambition and drive, prestigeless and humble, as well as behaviors such as clear communication and motivate others. Many of the discovered codes complement each other, such as *be a good colleague* and *be a team player*, whereas some codes are contradicting such as *be independent* and *follow the leader* as well as *speaking up and questioning* and *respect for authority*. In order to give an overview of the different codes, a comprehensive table of the codes is shown below.

Identified codes			
1	Speaking up and questioning	2	Be courageous
3	Influence to get your point through	4	Have integrity
5	Be independent	6	Take initiative
7	Communicate clearly	8	Be honest
9	Speaking up within frame	10	Choose your battles
11	Be responsible	12	Be solution-oriented
13	Do a good job	14	Take part in decision making
15	Know how to contribute to goal	16	Share overall goal
17	Have expert knowledge	18	Adhere to your frame
19	Make own decisions within frame	20	Accept that leader has final say
21	Be empathic (make life easier for leader)	22	Be a good colleague
23	Be a team player	24	Be self-aware
25	Willing to develop	26	Do your job
27	Follow decisions once made	28	Be loyal
29	Adjust behavior to leader	30	Listen to leader
31	Leader makes decision	32	Follow the leader
33	Respect authority	34	Professional
35	Positive attitude	36	High demands on self
37	Humble	38	Followers' behaviors resemble leaders' behaviors
39	No back stabbing	40	Passionate about job
41	Ambition	42	Open-minded and creative

**Table 3 – Overview of identified codes**

We refrain from calculating coding frequencies (i.e. the number of times a certain code was mentioned within and across interviews (Lee, Mitchell & Sablinski, 1999)), as this would limit our analysis to the codes that occur most often. However, in order to reduce outliers, we only consider codes that occur twice across interviews. In general, we reduce complexity by consolidating codes into groups that are assigned to reoccurring themes. We create 12 groups out of the 42 codes. These groups contain similar or related codes.



In order to exemplify this reasoning, we will briefly explain group (1) *always voice opinions*. This group consists of the four codes *speaking up and questioning*, *be courageous*, *influence to get your point through*, and *have integrity*. All four codes imply that followers should be frank and speak out their mind. This openness implies courage and is also not limited to certain situations. Therefore, we call this group *always voice opinion*. To give an overview of the different groups a comprehensive table of the identified groups is given below. As a last step, before moving on to the deductive analysis, we compare our findings to the findings by Carsten et al. (2010), by contrasting our codes and groups to the codes identified by Carsten et al. (2010).

Identified groups			
<b>1</b>	Always voice opinions	<b>2</b>	Be engaged
<b>3</b>	Voice opinions within frame	<b>4</b>	Be involved
<b>5</b>	Share common purpose	<b>6</b>	Have expertise
<b>7</b>	Adhere to boundaries	<b>8</b>	Be helpful and understanding
<b>9</b>	Self-focused	<b>10</b>	Be obedient
<b>11</b>	Defer to leader	<b>12</b>	Characteristics

**Table 4 – Overview of identified groups**

As stated above, the inductive analysis is followed by a deductive analysis. In this process we assign Carsten et al.'s (2010) classifications of passive, active and proactive to the groups that are previously identified. The deductive analysis is again conducted individually by each researcher and compared and discussed subsequently. When disagreements occur, reasons for disagreement and interpretation of Carsten et al.'s (2010) classifications are discussed.

According to Carsten et al. (2010), when followership is classified as proactive, a follower is described as “taking initiative, offering feedback and advice to leaders”, as well as constructively challenging his or her leaders’ assumptions “before (being) (...) asked to do so” (Carsten et al. 2010, p. 550-551). In line with this reasoning, we classify the following two groups as proactive.

Classification	Group	Code
Proactive	Always voice opinions	Speaking up and questioning
		Be courageous
		Influence to get your point through
		Have integrity
	Be engaged	Be independent
		Take initiative

**Table 5 – Overview of proactive groups and codes**

On the other hand, when followership is said to be active, followers express their opinions and offer input “when (...) solicited by their leaders”, according to Carsten et al. (2010, p. 550). The importance is placed on “offering opinions, but remaining loyal and steadfast to a leader’s decisions” (Carsten et al., 2010, p. 550). In line with Carsten et al.’s (2010) description of active, we identify the following seven groups as active.

Classification	Group	Code
Active	Voice opinions within frame	Communicate clearly
		Be honest
		Speaking up within frame
		Choose your battles
	Be involved	Be responsible
		Be solution-oriented
		Do a good job
		Take part in decision making
	Share common purpose	Know how to contribute to goal
		Share overall goal
	Have expertise	Have expert knowledge
	Adhere to boundaries	Adhere to your frame
		Make own decisions within frame
		Accept that leader has final say
	Be helpful and understanding	Be empathic (make life easier for leader)
		Be a good colleague
		Be a team player
	Self-focused	Be self-aware
		Willing to develop

Table 6 – Overview of active groups and codes

A passive construction on the other hand is “strongly aligned with traditional, passive descriptions” (Carsten et al., 2010, p. 550). Passive followers are described as “following through, taking orders, and doing things the “leader’s way” (Carsten et al., 2010, p. 550). In line with this reasoning, we identify the following two groups as passive.

Classification	Group	Code
Passive	Be obedient	Do your job
		Follow decisions once made
		Be loyal
	Defer to leader	Adjust behavior to leader
		Listen to leader
		Leader makes decision

		Follow the leader
		Respect for authority

Table 7 – Overview of passive groups and codes

In total, we classify 11 groups and refrain from labeling group (12) *characteristics*, as this group does not fall into any of Carsten et al.'s (2010) categories but is related to people's characteristics in general.

Classification	Group	Code
No classification	Characteristics	Professional
		Positive attitude
		High demands on self
		Humble
		Followers' behaviors resemble leaders' behaviors
		No back stabbing
		Passionate about job
		Ambition
		Open-minded and creative

Table 8 – Overview of no classification group and codes

To provide an overview, we visualize the overall coding process in the figure below.

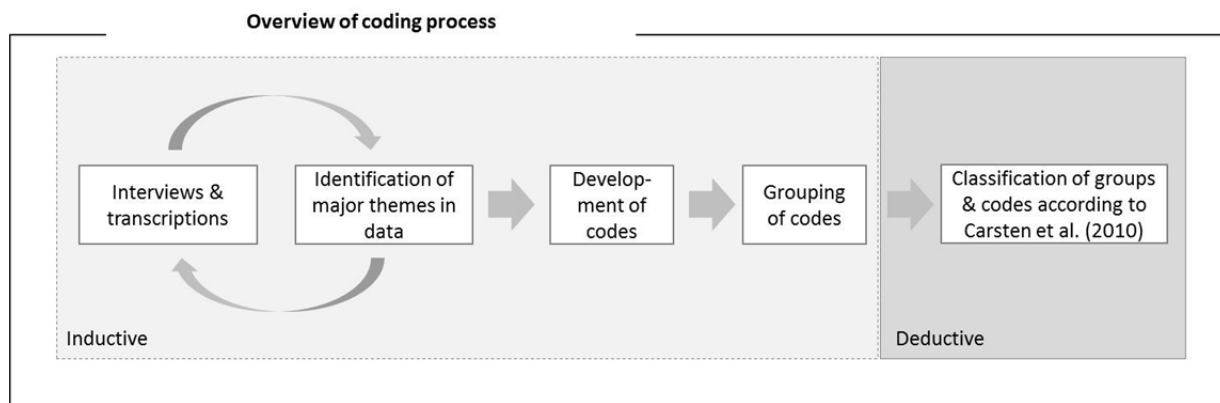


Figure 4 – Overview of coding process

By processing the collected data to usable qualitative data, we are able to begin with the data analysis.

### 3.5 Outline of analysis

The goal of our analysis is to find out leaders' and followers' social constructions of followership. This helps us to understand the meaning of followership to individuals in organizations. Moreover, we are interested in exploring whether individuals coherently construct followership. Therefore, we analyze whether individuals consistently refer to one of the three classifications by Carsten et al. (2010) when

constructing followership. Furthermore, we aim at analyzing factors influencing the constructions. In particular, we want to examine whether the socially constructed meanings of followership might be dependent on an individual's role, and/or the organizational context. In order to follow this path of analysis, we neglect the structure of a case study analysis (Eisenhardt, 1989; Yin, 2003), where a within-case analysis coupled with a cross-case analysis is conducted (Eisenhardt, 1989). Instead, we choose to structure our analysis in a way that will help us answer our research questions. Hence the outline is as follows:

- 1) Analysis of followership construction
- 2) Analysis of factors influencing the social construction of followership
  - a. Analysis of the role of the individual as influencing factor
  - b. Analysis of the organizational context as influencing factor – Determine specific components

In the first part of the analysis, we will explore the identified groups and codes to determine the meaning of the concept to our respondents. We will search for general patterns in the data and pay special attention to the codes and groups that are mentioned most. Besides, we will analyze the constructions of each individual to determine possible inconsistencies. As the qualitative data is transferred into excel, a thorough analysis is facilitated.

In the second part of the analysis, we will study factors influencing the social constructions of followership. In particular, we will analyze whether the social constructions differ depending on the role of the individual (i.e. leaders' constructions versus followers' constructions). Next, we will examine whether constructions of followership vary across organizations, and we will determine specific components of the organizational context that could be causing differences.

### **3.6 Quality aspects**

In this section we will discuss quality aspects regarding our method of gathering and analyzing empirical data. Since our thesis is built on qualitative data, we will use Miles and Huberman's (1994) criteria for judging the trustworthiness of our empirics. In line with Miles and Huberman (1994) and Yin (2003), we see four quality aspects as relevant for our work: objectivity, reliability, internal validity and external validity. In the following we will present these four aspects and describe how we strive to achieve them.

#### **Objectivity**

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), objectivity is the relative neutrality and freedom from unacknowledged researcher biases. In order to limit the researcher bias, all interviews are conducted in pairs, which according to Voss et al. (2002) reduce the impact of individual biases. Moreover, coding and grouping processes are done separately. Subsequently, the codes and groups are compared and combined to increase objectivity.

**Reliability**

Reliability describes the extent to which the process of the study is stable and consistent over time and across researchers (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Addressing the issue of reliability, we follow the suggestions by Yin (2003) and collect all data in a case study database. Moreover, we explain our process of collecting, coding, and analyzing our data in great detail in order to make our thought processes comprehensive and possible to replicate.

**Internal validity**

Internal validity is the extent to which the findings of the studies make sense and authentically portrait reality (Miles & Huberman, 1994). We ensure internal validity by sending our empirical findings back to the interviewees to confirm the results. However, we acknowledge that “qualitative research assumes that reality is constructed, multi-dimensional, and ever-changing” (Merriam, 1995, p. 54). In line with Merriam (1995), we therefore acknowledge that this study is our interpretation of reality.

**External validity**

External validity refers to whether the findings and the conclusions can be generalized beyond this immediate case study (Yin, 2003). Although this thesis is a case study and does not aim for widely generalizable conclusions, some of our findings, such as followership constructions and the factors influencing social constructions, can possibly be applicable in other contexts. The external validity of the findings is enhanced by the fact that two firms in different industries are subjects of this study. As participants have diverse backgrounds and are from varying organizational levels, a broader understanding of followership can be gathered. This in turn can lead to more general findings regarding constructions of followership.

## 4 Empirics

In the following, we will outline the empirical findings of our study. This section is structured according to our research questions. Therefore, we will first present the social constructions of followership in more detail, in order to determine the meaning of followership according to our respondents. Moreover, we will also show inconsistencies within individual constructions by using Carsten et al.'s (2010) classifications of passive, active and proactive. Second, we will analyze factors influencing social constructions of followership. More specifically, we will present differences in constructions when comparing leaders and followers as well as differences in constructions caused by the organizational context of HCC and CF. In all sections, we will use quotes from our participants to substantiate our findings. A comprehensive overview all quotes can be found in Appendix C.2 and a codification of the quotes is given in Appendix C.1.

### 4.1 The meaning of followership

In the following section, we will outline the meaning of followership by presenting the different codes and groups that we identify in our data. Moreover, we will highlight the codes that are mentioned most often throughout the interviews. Next, we will show inconsistencies in individual constructions by using the classifications by Carsten et al. (2010).

#### 4.1.1 Identified groups

In total we identify 42 different codes and 12 different groups from the interviews. Most of these codes and groups can be classified as proactive, active or passive classifications and a majority of the groups are classified as active. The groups we identify consist of *always voice opinions*, *be engaged*, *voice opinions within frame*, *be involved*, *share common purpose*, *have expertise*, *adhere to boundaries*, *be helpful and understanding*, *self-focused*, *be obedient*, *defer to leader*, and *characteristics*. In the following, we will describe the different groups to outline the meaning of followership in the two organizations that are the subjects of our study.

The groups *always voice opinions* and *be engaged* are classified as proactive. Within the *always voice opinions* group, respondents talk about the necessity of speaking up and questioning for instance when they think that the leader is going in the wrong direction. In the same group respondents also state that a follower should be courageous and for instance dare to challenge and have integrity. Some respondents further say that a follower should try to influence his or her leader in order to push a point or suggestion through.

"I think sometimes to tell the leader that something is going wrong. If you think that the leader is going in the wrong direction." (HCCF6)

"I mean a good follower is someone who dares to challenge." (CFF1)

"I really like employees that are having integrity so that say the things that they want to say (...)." (HCCL6)

"Being a follower, if I want my opinion through I need to present it in way that my boss wants it presented and the way he or she is evaluated." (HCCF1)

The group *be engaged* emphasizes the importance for a follower to be independent and think for him or herself, as well as to take initiative and be proactive.

"(...) if I were a formal leader that a bad follower came to me all the time and ask me all the time what should I do." (CFF2)

"I like energy and proactive behavior and that is the things that I think is most important." (CFL2)

The following groups are all classified as active and consist of *voice opinions within frame, be involved, share common purpose, have expertise, adhere to boundaries, be helpful and understanding, self-focused*. Within the group *voice opinions within frame*, respondents describe that a follower should communicate clearly and also be honest towards the leader. Moreover, interviewees say that a follower should speak up at the right time and pick his or her fights.

"(...) they should contact me I need to be contacted continuously to know what they are up to in the groups." (HCCL4)

["So what do leaders need from their followers?"] "(...) first of all they need honesty." (HCCF1)

"I am a thinking person and if I have ideas that I feel are productive or an improvement to the end result then I also take responsibility to voicing those at the right time." (CFL3)

"Pick your fights. I think that is very important (...) What is the issue about for real, has it something to do with me personally or is this really an issue." (CFF2)

Within the group *be involved*, interviewees say that a follower should be responsible for his or her tasks, provide solutions to issues or problems, do a good job and participate in decision making.

"I think that feeling responsible for your own actions and what should be done is an important quality." (HCCF4)

"Not just be negative so that if you have something that you think needs to be changed you also need to give tips and ideas on how you should be able to change things." (HCCF7)

"(...) try to choose the best behavior to accomplish as good result as possible." (CFL2)

"The leader has the responsibility that decisions are made and so on but on the other he can't do it on its own, the team has to contribute to that. So it is everyone's responsibility but the leader is the one accountable for it." (CFF1)

The group *share common purpose* describes that a follower should share the overall goal of the company and should also know how to contribute to it.

"A follower should (...) look at the broader picture but also taking on the broader picture (...)." (CFL1)

"I think a follower (...) understands (...) in what way he or she should act to contribute to the common goal." (CFF3)

The group *have expertise* specifies that a follower should possess expert knowledge.

"If I hire someone I would expect him or her to often exceed me in knowledge in his or her specific area." (HCCL3)

According to the group, *adhere to boundaries*, a follower should act within his or her given frame and should also make decisions within that frame. Within this group interviewees also mention that a follower should acknowledge the fact that the leader has the final say.

"Take responsibility for your responsibilities but not try to takeover everything. You have to know your place." (HCCF5)

"But of course they can make their own decisions. Up to a certain level." (HCCL2)

"But a follower should always know that the manager has the final word sometimes. He or she probably knows more about what is going on in the company, hopefully. And you need to understand that." (CFF4)

The group, *be helpful and understanding*, specifies the follower's interaction with other members of the organization, in particular the leader and colleagues. According to this group, a follower should be helpful and understanding towards his or her leader, be a team player and also help out colleagues.

"There are these quite funny little books about how do I make my manager's life easier? And then I am maybe not thinking for the manager personally but how can I facilitate so that we actually reach our goals." (HCCL5)



"And of course doing my part of the job but also understanding if my part is done and I have other colleagues that need my help it is also my job to help them if I can, contribute to our common goals." (CFF3)

"I think for me a follower is a lot like being a team player." (CFL2)

In the group *self-focused* respondents state that followers should be aware of themselves and their actions and also be willing to develop.

"A person with good knowledge about self. If you have good contact with your own reactions and why you are doing things." (CFF2)

"So if they would like to develop me or learn something new and that interacts with the objectives of the company then you have the perfect situation." (HCCL6)

We classify two groups, be *obedient* and *defer to leader*, as passive. In the first group, the interviewees emphasize that a follower should do his or her job and complete the tasks that he or she is given. Additionally, interviewees also state that once a decision has been made, it should be followed. Loyalty, for instance towards the company is also mentioned in this group.

"To perform the work that is expected of me and the tasks that I get from my manager." (HCCF7)

"You should also follow when the leader says end of discussion. Now we are doing it in this direction. Ok." (CFL1)

" (...) in a professional environment if you are a follower you need to follow the board (...) if they decide in the end to change the CEO that is a good thing for me." (HCCF1)

Overall, the second group, *defer to leader*, refers to a follower's relationship with the leader as a superior. Within this group, it is stated that a follower should adjust his or her behavior to the leader, and also listen to the leader. Moreover, some respondents say that the leader is the one who makes the decision and that the follower should follow the leader. Also, some state that a follower should have respect for authority and superiors.

"Maybe that you adjust your behavior to the characteristics of the leader. That's what I come to think of. That you little bit adjust." (HCCF6)

"But a follower should listen to what the boss says and do the job." (HCCF5)

"The manager makes the decision but the followers' task is to report when decisions are contradicting or not working." (HCCF3)

"(...) the leader is responsible for pointing out the direction in some ways and according to that all the team players have to adjust according to that or be flexible or try to follow that." (CFL2)

"If you are in a meeting there is one person responsible for the meeting then it is rude to take over and lead the meeting. You have to let the leader lead." (CFF1)

We refrain from classifying the group *characteristics* into passive, active and proactive, as this group is related to people's characteristics in general. Within this group interviewees describe a range of general characteristics and behaviors that they find important for a follower. One example is that followers should be *passionate about their job*. One of the respondents for instance describes a good follower in the following way:

"A good follower is someone that comes to work and you can see it in their eyes and they like what they do and they want to do the best at their job." (HCCF2)

Other codes that can be found within this group are *positive attitude, high demands on self, open-minded and creative*.

#### 4.1.2 Prominent codes

In the following, we will move from the group level to the code level and describe the codes that are mentioned most often ( $n \geq 13$ ) throughout the interviews.

One of the most prominent and most often referred to aspects in the interviews is speaking up ( $n=19$ ). Followers and leaders from both organizations refer to speaking up as an important duty of a follower. However, we decide to split up the dimension into *speaking up and questioning* and *speaking up within frame*. Even though both codes refer to speaking up, we realize that there is a difference in the quotes. Some participants highlight that followers should always speak up and voice their opinions.

"(...) it is important to have people around you that do not say yes to everything I say. I want people to say what they think. I want them to challenge me I want to have a lot of discussions." (HCCL1)

"If you disagree then I think it is your responsibility to say that." (CFF2)

This code is labeled as *speaking up and questioning* and is assembled in the group *always voice opinions*.

On the other hand, other interviewees mention that questions and disagreement shall be raised within a frame and shall not always be provided. Statements in line with this reasoning are grouped under *voice opinions within frame*.

" (...) an efficient and good follower needs to have the sense of when to just do things and when to say I do not think that this is a good idea (...) and that is a tricky part of being an efficient follower I think as well to realize when to say no and when to just pull through." (HCCF1)

"I am a thinking person and if I have ideas that I feel are productive or an improvement to the end result then I also take responsibility to voicing those at the right time." (CFL3)

"You can disagree as a follower that is completely ok but you also need to know when it is time to align." (CFF4)

Another code that is mentioned repeatedly across interviews (n=13) is *communicate clearly*. In general, clear communication is referred to in the context of a leader-follower relationship. Respondents say that especially leaders need followers to communicate clearly in order to understand "what is going on" and to be able to reach goals.

"Especially inform me about what is going. (...) I always want to know what is going on." (HCCL2)

"Good communication, confirmation (...) Yes. Also confirm that you understand what he or she [the leader] is saying and if you don't understand then you should say that." (CFF1)

The code *be honest* is in line with the code *communicate clearly*, and is mentioned repeatedly across interviews (n=14). Honesty is often referred to as openness and frankness towards own weaknesses.

One leader for example says that:

"There is really only one thing, which makes me really frustrated, and that is if you say that things are done and then they are not." (HCCL5)

Also followers mention that they should be honest to their leaders about not being able to complete tasks and jobs. One follower for example says that a bad follower is:

"(...) someone that doesn't deliver and who doesn't tell it. Don't do what they are supposed to do and not saying it." (HCCF5)

Another code that is mentioned many times (n=14) during the interviews is *be responsible*. According to the respondents, followers should be responsible for their own work and also take on "greater responsibility".

"I think that feeling responsible for your own actions and what should be done is an important quality." (HCCF4)

"A good follower is someone who takes on greater responsibility than just his or her area of responsibility." (CFL1)

#### 4.1.3 Individuals' constructions

When looking at the individual constructions, we can see that all respondents refer to all three of Carsten et al.'s (2010) classifications of passive, active and proactive simultaneously when constructing followership. This is visualized in the figure below, where the different shades symbolize the three classifications. We can therefore conclude that no construction is purely proactive, active, or passive.

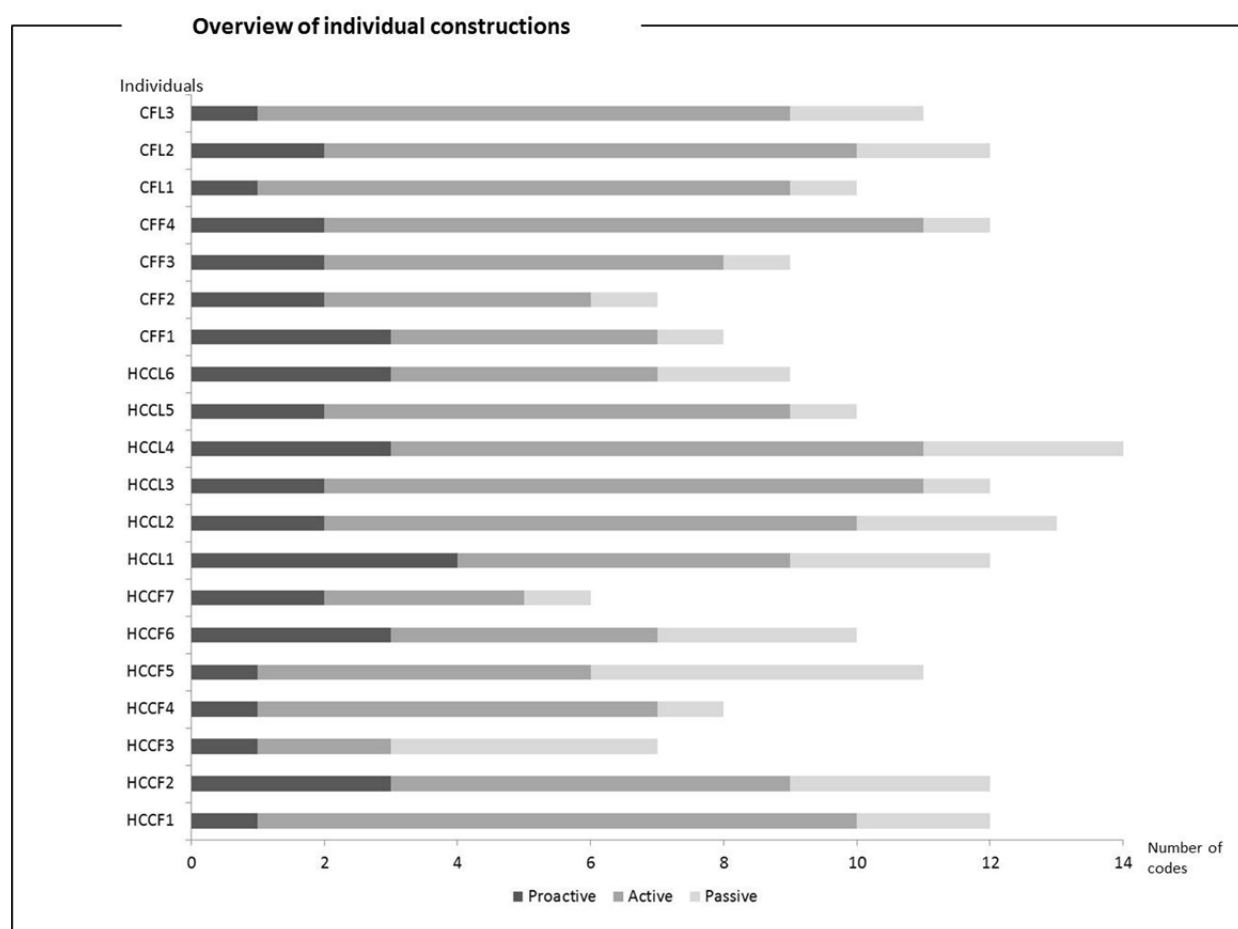


Figure 5 – Overview of individual constructions

To exemplify the incoherence in constructions, we will present two individual constructions in the following.

On the one hand, this follower (HCCF2) uses proactive codes when describing followership and states that a follower should take initiative and always speak up and question.

"(...) a follower also needs to realize what needs to be done and do it." (HCCF2)

"So its important to (...) feel that you can say things and challenge and question your leader or yourself and not feel intimidated by that." (HCCF2)

Moreover, he also says that he influences his leader to get his point through, which is also a proactive dimension.

"I change the way I question them. I don't stop questioning. I just change the way, so it's not that obvious. So I try to find ways to get through it somehow." (HCCF2)

At the same time, he states that a follower should accept that *the leader has the final say* and that you should *be empathic* and make life easier for your leader. These codes can be classified as active according to Carsten et al. (2010).

"(...) at the end of the day it really is the leader who directs the way and sets the goals for the team." (HCCF2)

"A good follower is someone who understands the leader's role and helps the leader to achieve it." (HCCF2)

Besides, the respondent also describes passive dimensions such as *do your job* and *listen to the leader*.

"Everything comes down to do your job, I would say." (HCCF2)

"If I was a leader and had someone following me then I would want that person to listen to me (...). But to listen and understand where my point of view comes from." (HCCF2)

A second example of an incoherent construction is given by the following leader (CFL2) who constructs followership equally dispersed across the three dimensions proactive, active and passive.

On the one hand, this participant mentions a proactive code when constructing followership and refers to *take initiative*.

"I like energy and proactive behavior and that is the things that I think is most important." (CFL2)

On the other hand, the interviewee also refers to active dimensions such as *be a team player* and *be honest*.

"I think for me a follower is a lot like being a team player." (CFL2)

"And be open and honest I think that is important too." (CFL2)

Moreover, he also refers to passive dimensions such as *follow the leader* and *adjust behavior to leader*.

"(...) the leader is responsible for pointing out the direction (...) and according to that all the team players have to adjust according to that or be flexible or try to follow that." (CFL2)

"So it is a combination of being kind of flexible and trying to adjust to what we are trying to accomplish (...)" (CFL2)

Both of these participants are examples of incoherent constructions, as they describe proactive, active and passive codes simultaneously. As stated above, all participants construct followership dispersed over the three dimensions.

## 4.2 Factors influencing social constructions of followership

In the following section, we will present findings regarding factors that influence social constructions of followership. In particular we will present differences in constructions when comparing leaders' and followers' social constructions of followership. Furthermore, we will present differences in constructions when comparing individuals from HCC to individuals from CF.

### 4.2.1 Differences between leaders and followers

Below, we will outline our findings regarding the differences in constructions depending on the role of the respondents. First, we will briefly present some general findings when taking the two different roles into consideration. Second, we will show differences between leaders' and followers' constructions of followership by presenting the most salient groups and codes for the respective role.

From our data we can see that leaders and followers are evenly distributed over the three different classifications of proactive, active and passive (Carsten et al. 2010). Also, leaders and followers place a fairly equal importance on the codes within the group *characteristics*. Both leaders and followers mostly refer to codes that are active throughout the interviews.

However, some differences can be noticed between leaders' and followers' constructions of followership.

Leaders	Followers
Communicate clearly	Be empathic (make life easier for leader)
Share overall goal	

Have expert knowledge	
Follow decisions once made	

Table 9 – Difference between leaders and followers

Being able to *communicate clearly* is emphasized more by leaders than by followers. One of the leaders states that clear communication is necessary in order to reach goals, while another leader says that followers should communicate when they do not understand the tasks they are given.

"(...) to have such a direct and open communication is of course very important. Because otherwise you cannot reach a goal." (HCCL5)

"Otherwise if I do not understand I have a responsibility to ask so I understand what to do." (CFL2)

Furthermore, leaders place more importance on the code *share overall goal*. One leader for example states that a follower should work towards the goals of the company, whereas another leader mentions that a follower should adhere to the broader picture.

"(...) that you act in a way that takes you to the company's goals. If you do that then you can be a follower in your own ways. But a follower would do what is right for the company." (HCCL1)

"A follower should (...) look at the broader picture but also taking on the broader picture (...)." (CFL1)

Moreover, leaders emphasize possessing *expert knowledge* and *follow decisions once made* more than followers. For instance, one leader states that leaders cannot be experts in all areas and need their followers to be experts in their field.

"All of us need to be experts in some kind of area. Meaning one leader could not be the expert in all of those areas. Meaning also the leader need to follow the followers." (CFL1)

One leader explains *follow decisions once made* as stated below.

"But if we decide something I think it is very important that everyone follows it and keep the deadlines and so on." (HCCL4)

Followers on the other hand, put more emphasis on being empathic and making life easier for the leader. One follower expresses it as helping the leader in his or her role.

"You can never expect a formal leader to be perfect so you always need followers that help creating the structure and the goals and the meaning and the vision and mission." (CFF3)

"A good follower is someone who understands the leader's role and helps the leader to achieve it." (HCCF2)

In general, it can be noted that there are some differences between leaders' and followers' constructions of followership. Leaders emphasize the codes *communicate clearly*, *share overall goal*, *have expert knowledge* and *follow decisions once made*. Followers find it important to *be empathic* (*make life easier for leader*).

#### 4.2.2 Differences between HCC and CF

In this section, we will present differences in social constructions between HCC and CF. First, we will briefly present some general findings when taking the two different organizational contexts into consideration. Thereafter, we illustrate the most salient groups and codes for the respective company.

When looking at Carsten et al.'s (2010) classifications of passive, active and proactive, it can be noted that both companies mention groups within the active classification most. However, employees at HCC refer more to passive groups than employees at CF. However, no significant difference can be noted between the companies when looking at active and proactive groups.

HCC	CF
Professional	Share overall goal
Have expert knowledge	Know how to contribute to goal
Do your job	Be independent
Follow decisions once made	
Be loyal	

Table 10 – Difference between HCC and CF

Respondents from Health Care Company mention *professional* significantly more often than employees from Consulting Firm. Participants describe *professional* as refraining from talking badly about colleagues or the company. One respondent for example says that a bad follower is a person who talks about the company and his or her colleagues, while another employee states that a follower should be focused on work and avoid talking badly.

"[A bad follower is] someone who speaks about their colleagues and the company and smiles when the boss arrives." (HCCL4)

"But all this nagging and personal thing, I think that followers need to put that aside and come to work just with a business mind and work. And try to see everything clearly." (HCCF2)



Another code that stands out at HCC is the importance for a follower to possess *expert knowledge*. Respondents mention that followers should have more expertise in their specific area than their leaders.

"(...) they hire for example me because I have some specific knowledge that they don't have." (HCCF2)

"If I hire someone I would expect him or her to often exceed me in knowledge in his or her specific area." (HCCL3)

Furthermore, the three codes, *do your job*, *follow decisions once made*, and *be loyal*, within the group *be obedient* are all mentioned more at Health Care Company than at Consulting Firm. This group is classified as passive. One interviewee for example describes a bad follower as someone who is not doing his or her job, while another interviewee mentions that a follower should *follow decisions once made*. Moreover, to *be loyal* is mentioned several times at HCC but not at all at CF. When referring to loyalty, HCC employees mostly describe it in relation to the company.

"And that is probably the key for a bad follower, if just 5 of them are done. And that probably is the number one of being a bad follower, not completing tasks you are given." (HCCF1)

"The most important thing, when we have made a decision is to follow that." (HCCF3)

"For me it's more important that you have the loyalty as such. (...) I have my loyalty for the company." (HCCF6)

On the other hand, employees at CF mention repeatedly that a follower should *share overall goal* of the company. One of the participants for instance states:

"Followership for me is to try to understand what we are trying to accomplish together and with that in mind try to choose the best behavior to accomplish as good result as possible." (CFL2)

In line with this, another interviewee states that if a follower does not agree with the direction of the company he or she should leave.

"(...) we need to go there and I agree with the strategy. Because if you disagree with the strategy you should be somewhere else." (CFF4)

Within the same group, *adhere to boundaries*, interviewees at CF state that followers should *know how to contribute to goal*. This appears to be more important at CF than at HCC, as it is mentioned more throughout the interviews.

"I think a follower (...) understands (...) in what way he or she should act to contribute to the common goal." (CFF3)

To *be independent* is a characteristic that is also considered to be more essential for employees at Consulting Firm than at Health Care Company. For instance, one of the respondents states that a follower should not expect to be told everything.

"Well a basic requirement is never to become a passive victim, don't ever behave like a newly hatched chick that is expected to be fed everything." (CFL3)

Overall, it can be noted that there are some differences between HCC and CF regarding the social constructions of followership. Employees at HCC emphasize the codes *professional, have expert knowledge, do your job, follow decisions once made* and *be loyal* more than employees at CF. Employees at CF on the other hand, refer to *share overall goal, know how to contribute to goal*, and *be independent* more than respondents from HCC.

## 5 Analysis

In the following section, we will present the analysis of our empirics. First, we will analyze the meaning of followership as well as the incoherence within individual constructions and provide possible reasons for these findings. Second, we will analyze the differences in constructions that we identify between followers and leaders and discuss possible reasons. Lastly, we will examine the differences in constructions that are found between the two companies and provide possible explanations for the differences. The analysis is based on the literature presented in our theoretical framework.

### 5.1 The meaning of followership

We will begin our analysis by first examining the social constructions of followership. We will then analyze the incoherence within individual constructions. Additionally, we will provide possible reasons for these findings.

#### 5.1.1 Identified groups

Based on our interviews with leaders and followers at HCC and CF, we identify 42 codes and 12 groups, which together portray the meaning of followership in these companies. The amount of codes and groups implies that respondents do not uniformly describe followership but use many different codes when describing it.

In order to analyze our codes and groups, we will use the codes that Carsten et al. (2010) identify in their study as a comparison. A comprehensive overview of Carsten et al.'s (2010) codes is given in the theoretical framework (Table 2). Moreover, we will also relate our findings to follower behaviors that Kelley (1988), Chaleff (2003) and Kellerman (2008) describe.

Our findings within the proactive group *always voice opinions* resemble some of the work by Chaleff (2003), and especially his third component of courageous followership (Chaleff, 2003). According to this component, a follower should have the courage to challenge and voice discomfort regarding behaviors or policies of the leader or group that conflict with his or her own morals (Chaleff, 2003). In line with this, our respondents emphasize that a follower should speak up when he or she thinks that the leader is wrong or when he or she does not agree with the direction of the company. Moreover, the respondents also point out that a follower should possess courage, such as the courage to challenge. Others express it as “not being afraid”, for instance of conflicts or authority. Our findings regarding speaking up and questioning also resemble the findings by Carsten et al. (2010), whose respondents also emphasize that a follower should communicate his or her opinions to the leader and the group. However, Carsten et al. (2010) also find that followers should be constructive when expressing opinions. In our study, only one individual mentions that dissent should be constructive, whereas the other respondents do not mention how to voice opinions or disagreement.

Some of our respondents emphasize that a follower should *be independent*, which for many of them mean that a follower should be able to think for him or herself. This is similar to what Kelley (1988) describes as a quality of an effective follower. In his article, Kelley (1988) refers to this as self-management. Within the same group a couple of respondents also talk about the importance of taking initiative and being proactive. This coincides with findings by Carsten et al. (2010).

Within the group *voice opinions within frame* respondents state that followers should be honest and for instance speak out their mind. According to Kelley (1988), honesty is a quality of an effective follower and in the study by Carsten et al. (2010) honesty is also mentioned by the respondents. Similar to the study by Carsten et al. (2010), our respondents emphasize communication in their constructions of followership. However, in our case communication refers to the leader-follower relationship, whereas in Carsten et al.'s (2010) study it refers to communication skills. Within this group, some interviewees state that followers should know when it is appropriate to speak up, and that they should choose their battles. This is not found by Carsten et al. (2010).

In our study, the participants emphasize that a follower should know and understand the goals of the company, share them and also act in line with them. Moreover, some respondents also state that a follower should know how to contribute to the goal. This coincides with the finding by Carsten et al. (2010). Respondents in their study emphasize that followers should be aware of the overarching company goals and direction (Carsten et al. 2010).

Within the group *have expertise* leaders and followers state that a follower should possess expert knowledge exceeding the knowledge of the leader. The importance of the follower being knowledgeable is not found by Carsten et al. (2010). However, Kelley (1988) states that an effective follower possesses skills that are useful to the organization.

In our study participants state that a follower should be helpful and understanding towards the leader. Moreover, respondents also say that followers should be helpful towards their colleagues. This is in line with findings by Carsten et al. (2010), who also find that followers should be a “team player” (Carsten et al., 2010, p. 549).

Several of our findings within the two passive groups, *be obedient* and *defer to leader*, resemble the findings by Carsten et al. (2010). Similarities can be found regarding a followers’ duty to follow decisions once made. Some respondents emphasize that a leader needs his or her followers to follow, and the followers to act upon the direction set by the leader. Moreover, some respondents say that the leader is the one who makes the decisions. According to Carsten et al. (2010), obedience and deference is commonly associated with the follower role. These descriptions also coincide with Kellerman’s (2008, p. xix) definition of followers: “Subordinates who have less power, authority, and influence than do their superiors and who therefore usually, but not invariably, fall into line”. In our study, some of the respondents also think that a follower should adapt and adjust him or herself to the leader, which is also found in the study by Carsten et al. (2010) where it is stated that a follower should be “malleable” (Carsten et al. 2010, p. 549). However, our findings within these groups also show some differences to the study by Carsten et al. (2010). The respondents in Carsten et al.’s (2010) study emphasize loyalty towards the leader and his or her ideas, whereas only one of our respondents mentions this. Several respondents instead talk about loyalty towards the company. Finally, interviewees in our study emphasize the necessity for a follower to do his or her job and fulfill the tasks he or she is given. However, this is not found in the study made by Carsten et al. (2010).

The comparison of our results to previous research reveals similarities in constructions, such as raise voice, independence, etc. However, we also identify some aspects that are not yet discussed in research, for instance, that a follower should complete the task he or she is given.

As mentioned in the empirics, there are some codes (n=9) that cannot be grouped into Carsten et al.'s (2010) classification of proactive, active and passive. These codes are rather neutral and describe characteristics or behaviors of followers, such as *high demands on self* or *humble*, etc. Not being able to classify these codes into one of the categories, could indicate that Carsten et al.'s (2010) classifications are not sufficient to capture the meaning of followership. It can therefore be argued that the constructions of followership are more varied and have more meanings, with a higher degree of complexity, than previously assumed. Followership is thus not fully classifiable according to Carsten et al.'s (2010) activity scale.

The variety of codes and groups demonstrates that the term followership holds many different meanings for leaders and followers within the two organizations. This multiplicity of meaning is in line with the findings by Bresnen (1995) and Carsten et al. (2010), as both authors find diverse and complex constructions of leadership and followership. In his study about how leaders socially construct leadership, Bresnen (1995) finds that constructions of leadership are “varied” and “complex” (Bresnen, 1995, p. 509). Therefore it is “inappropriate” to simply map behaviors of followers and leaders in a “two dimensional framework” (Bresnen, 1995, p. 509), like Kelley (1988) does with his two dimensional matrix on followers (see figure 1). The variety of codes that we find in our data indicates that, for instance, Kelley (1988) and Chaleff (2008) seem to oversimplify the concept of followership.

### 5.1.2 Prominent codes

Even though the respondents do not construct a shared, collective meaning of followership, four codes were mentioned most (n≥13) across interviews. These four codes are *speaking up and questioning*, *be honest*, *communicate clearly*, and *be responsible*. These four codes show the highest consensus across interviews and are repeatedly referred to. We can therefore assume that these four codes can be seen as the most shared aspects of followership. What is striking is that three of these codes are classified as active according to Carsten et al. (2010), while one of them is classified as proactive. This leads us to the conclusion that followership is constructed highly active in our study, as most of the codes are classified as active (n=19). A reason for this could be that most respondents construct followership moderately and do not refer to more extreme codes that are labeled as proactive or passive. Moreover, this finding is also in line with a trend in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in which authors argue that followers are “active rather

than passive” (Baker, 2007, p. 56). According to Baker (2007), there was wide agreement in the 20<sup>th</sup> century that followers played an active role in the leader-follower relationship. Follett (1996, in Baker, 2007) for instance suggest that followers have an active role in keeping the leader in control of a situation. In line with this is Barnard’s (1987, in Baker, 2007) argument that followers hold power over leaders’ authority as they grant their cooperation and approval to the leader. Also, Hollander and Offermann (1990, in Baker, 2007) describe both leaders and followers as active.

### 5.1.3 Individuals’ constructions

As outlined in the empirics, participants’ constructions are incoherent according to the classifications of Carsten et al. (2010). As mentioned in the previous chapter, participants refer to all three classifications of proactive, active and passive, instead of coherently referring to one classification when constructing followership. This finding gives rise to the assumption that individual constructions are more complex than assumed by Carsten et al. (2010). We therefore believe that Carsten et al.’s (2010) three groups of passive, active and proactive are a good attempt to differentiate across constructions but they do not sufficiently highlight the multiplicity and variations within individual constructions.

The incoherent constructions that we find can, for instance, be reasoned for that interviewees approach the topic from different angles throughout the interview. Therefore, they express contradictory views in different sections of the interview (Talja, 1999). This explanation can be exemplified by the following two statements that are made by one respondent. The first statement is proactive, whereas the second statement is classified as passive.

“So it’s important to (...) feel that you can say things and challenge and question your leader (...).” (HCCF2)

“Leaders need from their followers to follow them. They need them to pay attention and really do what they are told to do.” (HCCF2)

In general, it must be noted that interviewees inevitably interpret the topic in question. As followership, the subject of the interview, is not perceived in a similar way across respondents interview talk can be seen as “reflexive, theoretical, contextual and textual” (Talja, 1999, p. 6). Moreover, the inconsistencies within constructions are not necessarily evident or a problem for the respondents since they only have the capacity to remember the two or three of their latest interpretations (Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984, in Talja, 1999). However, if two inconsistencies appear in the same section, the respondents usually become aware of their variations and try to resolve them (Talja, 1999). If respondents do not try to

resolve potential contradictions, it is a clear sign of different interpretative repertoires to which the respondents are referring (Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984, in Talja 1999; Wetherell & Potter, 1988, in Talja, 1999). As the interviewees in our study do not try to resolve their inconsistencies, we assume that people have different repertoires to which they are referring when constructing followership.

The different repertoires can be seen as implicit theories that represent the cognitive categories or schemas providing the underlying structure of followership meaning (Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007, in Shamir et al., 2007). These schemas or cognitive categories are developed through socialization and experiences and are stored in memory (Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007, in Shamir et al., 2007). As the contexts are changing and new knowledge is acquired, the schemas are likely to clash overtime. However, instead of resolving these differences, additional repertoires are stored in memory. They are revealed when people socially construct followership and describe it.

## 5.2 Factors influencing social constructions of followership

In the following section, we will analyze the differences in constructions that we identify between followers and leaders and discuss possible reasons. Thereafter, we will examine the differences in constructions that we find between the two companies and provide explanations for the differences.

### 5.2.1 Differences between leaders and followers

Below, we will explore possible reasons for differences in leaders' and followers' constructions of followership.

Overall, it is prominent that there is no noticeable difference between leaders and followers in terms of Carsten et al.'s (2010) classification of proactive, active, and passive. Both groups refer mostly to active codes when constructing followership. However, as outlined in the empirics section, differences between leaders' and followers' construction of followership are prominent. Several codes are mentioned more by leaders than followers throughout the interviews. These codes are to *communicate clearly*, *share overall goal*, *have expert knowledge*, and *follow decisions once made*. On the other hand, the code *be empathic* is mentioned more by followers than by leaders.

According to Crossman and Crossman (2011), it is likely that the understanding of followership varies depending on the perspective from which followership is approached. Our findings indicate that this assumption is correct and that the respondent's position or role within the organization matters when constructing followership. It can be argued that the roles give frames from where respondents construct, as roles "institutionalize the interactions and definitions that shape the reality of

organizational life” (Smircich & Morgan, 1982, p. 259). As leaders answer the questions from the leaders’ perspective, it is possible that they construct followership in a way that suits their position. The same reasoning also applies to followers when they are constructing followership.

*Communicate clearly* is mentioned more by leaders than followers when constructing followership. One reason for this finding could be that it is vital for a leader to know what is going on. According to Turak (2012, p. 2), “(...) leaders are great worriers” and therefore they place great emphasis on active and clear communication about the status quo or possible difficulties. Moreover, leaders depend on followers’ contribution and more importantly on their information as they ground their decisions in them (Vroom & Yetton, 1973). This might explain why leaders mention *communicate clearly* more than followers throughout the interviews.

Another code that leaders bring up more than followers is *share overall goal*. According to Kotter (2001), it is the leader’s duty to set the direction and to align people. Unless individuals “move together in the same direction, people will tend to fall all over one another” (Kotter, 2001, p. 90). This might explain why leaders want their followers to follow the path they have outlined and share the same goals. Moreover, as leaders hold the ultimate responsibility and accountability for achieving the overall goals (Guttman, 2009), they need their followers to share and work towards them. If followers would be working towards different goals, it would be considerably more difficult for a leader to achieve the outlined goal. The code *follow decisions once made*, which is also mentioned more by leaders than followers could be reasoned for in the same fashion. As leaders want to align their followers and make them share the same goal they also want them to follow decisions once they are made. This is important to the leader, as it ensures that all followers act in line and follow the outlined path.

*Have expert knowledge* is mentioned more by leaders than by followers. One reason for this difference could be that leaders want their followers to be experts in their field in order to contribute at their best to the common goal. This finding is in line with a study by Agho (2009) who explores important follower behaviors and duties from a senior executive’s perspective. His findings suggest that followership competence is the second most important quality of a follower from a leader’s perspective (Agho, 2009, p. 162). Leaders who claim that followers should possess expert knowledge are likely to view followers as advisors or experts. It is the followers who possess expertise in a specific field and the leader who combines the different experts (Bateman, 2011). This could be a reason for why leaders place greater emphasis on *have expert knowledge* than followers.



One code that is mentioned more by followers than by leaders is to *be empathic (make life easier for the leader)*. Turak (2012) argues in the same fashion and states that followers should behave in an anticipative manner. One reason why followers refer more to this code could be that they are more aware of this behavior. Anticipation or empathy might not be as visible to the leader, as it is more subtle. Followers on the other hand, enact empathic behavior and are thus more aware of it.

### 5.2.2 Differences between HCC and CF

As outlined in the empirics, we find several differences between the social constructions of followership when comparing HCC to CF. These differences show that the organizational context is likely to have an impact on the social constructions of followership. In the following section, the differences between the companies will be analyzed and possible reasons for these differences will be presented.

In line with research, we argue that the organizational context has an impact on social constructions (Meindl, 1995; Carsten et al., 2010; Tanoff & Barlow, 2002). Therefore, we believe that the differences between HCC and CF are caused by components of the organizational context. According to Carsten et al. (2010), organizational climate and leadership style are two components of the organizational context that play an important role in how individuals socially construct followership. However, in our study we are able to identify additional components, which we believe are causing differences between HCC and CF. These components are the *state of the organization, the structure of the organization, the culture of the organization and the specific preoccupations of the employees*.

Employees at HCC say that followers should refrain from talking bad about the company and their colleagues and instead be *professional*. A reason why this code is mentioned at HCC but not at CF could lie in the state of the organization (Porter & McLaughlin, 2006). As outlined in the case presentation, HCC has recently undergone changes in terms of organizational structure, ownership and leadership. Due to these changes, HCC has experienced turnover among employees. During our study these changes are still affecting HCC and its employees. Some of the interviewees describe the changes in structure and leadership as follows:

“(…) I think this has been a really good company growing kind of in a peaceful way for several years. Now we are a bigger company and we need more structure and need to be more business oriented which is a shame in one way but it is absolutely necessary because otherwise we won’t survive and we won’t be able to reach our goals (…). (HCCL1)

“Yes, there has been a lot of change at [HCC] (…). But [HCC’s] leadership organization has changed recently and it’s not yet implemented fully. It is still a little foggy.” (HCCF2)

We conclude from the interviews that not all people in the organization have been pleased with the changes in management and structure. For instance, the same leader quoted above continued by saying:

“(...) and some people don't like that. Like a conflict between two cultures the new one and the old one. And some will do the change but others won't.” (HCCL1)

Resistance is a normal emotional reaction to change (Kotter & Cohen, 2005). Furthermore, the changes, and perhaps especially the employee turnover, have created an uncertain and stressful atmosphere for the employees. This could be a reason for why there is some negative talk in the company. One of the followers for instance says:

“There is quite a lot of whispering (...). I think it is a lot about the leadership style. It is probably much about that and then that there have been so many reorganizations so people are tired of it. And that makes you less tolerant towards each other and managers I think.” (HCCF7)

We can infer from this quote that the changes at HCC have upset the employees. A feeling of stress and fear is likely to have nurtured negative talk in the organization. Employees can use their negative talk as a way to cope with the ongoing changes in the organization. By speaking to their colleagues, they can express their feelings of anger and frustration. Hence, the state of the organization, in terms of the ongoing changes, might therefore explain the fact that only employees at HCC mention professionalism throughout the interviews.

*Be loyal* is a passive code that is mentioned only by employees at HCC. As described in the empirics section, respondents mostly mention being loyal in relation to the company. Due to changes in ownership and structure, the employee turnover has been relatively high, especially in higher management functions, such as the CEO position. Therefore, being loyal to the company, instead of being loyal to a manager, can be a way of safeguarding against changes in management. Just as the previous code, *professional*, loyalty might therefore be explained by the ongoing changes at HCC.

Another code that stands out at HCC is *have expert knowledge*. A majority of the respondents at HCC say that a follower should possess *expert knowledge* that the leader does not have. The emphasis on this code might be grounded in employees' specific preoccupations (Bryman et al., 1996) at HCC. The type of industry in which HCC operates is highly specialized and thus requires thorough and specific knowledge of its employees'. Each business area is regulated by specific laws, and for instance an employee working within the business area of disability needs extensive knowledge of the particular regulations within that

area, such as *Lag om Stöd och Service till vissa funktionshindrade* (LSS).<sup>2</sup> Even though the employees at CF also need extensive knowledge within their respective business area, the consulting profession as such is more diverse (Reihlen & Werr, 2012). The professional service work conducted by professional service firms involves a high level of customization, discretionary effort and personal judgement from the expert who delivers the service (Løwendahl, 2005 in Werr and Schilling, 2010). This means that the consultants are constantly exposed to varying assignments, which require the consultants to possess broader knowledge. Therefore, it is reasonable to believe that *expert knowledge* is more important at HCC, due to the nature of the industry and the specific tasks of the employees.

Additionally, employees at HCC mention the codes *do your job* and *follow decisions once made* more than employees at CF. These codes are within the same group and are both classified as passive. The organizational context, and in particular the structure of the company, could serve as an explanation for why these codes are more prominent at HCC. In line with this, Bryman et al. (1996) recognize organizational structure as a component of the organizational context. CF is still a fairly young company and continues to develop further. HCC on the other hand, is more mature and therefore its structures are more stable and set. At CF the frames for the employees are broad, while at HCC each employee has an explicitly set frame. Employees at HCC therefore know their place in the organization and their responsibilities are clearly set. Employees have to fulfill these responsibilities in order for the organization to function, hence *do your job* could be reasoned to be more important at HCC than at CF. Furthermore, in addition to the fact that employees know their place in the organization, HCC is more hierarchical than CF, and the line of decision making is clearer. This would serve as an explanation to why the code *follow decisions once made* is mentioned more.

CF is less structured and has broader frames for its employees. This would serve as a reason for why the respondents in the interviews emphasize the code *share overall goal*. As employees have greater freedom in their work, the company has to ensure that everyone moves in the same direction. This makes sharing the overall goal an important aspect for CF. Within the same group, *share common purpose*, the respondents at CF also emphasize the code *know how to contribute to goal*. A reason for this might be that the frames of the employees are broad. However, if an employee knows how he or she should act in order to contribute to the overall goal, a frame is created. This means that the organizational component, structure, serves as an explanation for why employees at CF emphasize the codes *share overall goal*, and *know how to contribute to goal*.

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<sup>2</sup> Law regarding Support and Service for certain disabled people (Authors' translation)

Another code that is more prominent at CF than at HCC is *be independent*. An explanation for this might lie in the culture of the company, which is a component of the organizational context (Porter & McLaughlin, 2006). According to Schein (1990), the culture of an organization or group manifests itself on three levels: “(a) observable artifacts, (b) values, and (c) basic underlying assumptions” (Schein, 1990, p. 111). In this case, *be independent* can be understood as a product of the second level of culture, the values. Values refer to “a culture’s espoused and documented values, norms, ideologies, charters, and philosophies” (Schein, 1990, p. 112). One important philosophy of CF, which is mentioned in the interviews, is personal-leadership. Personal leadership is explained as an individual’s responsibility to act as a leader without having the formal position of a leader. Furthermore, one of the leaders expresses it in the following way:

“(…) personal leadership is really to take broader responsibility for the whole of the company and not only my responsibilities and authorities.” (CFL1)

To be able to act as leader and to take on broader responsibilities than one’s assigned duties requires an individual to be independent. Hence, the philosophy of personal-leadership can explain the emphasis on the code *be independent* at CF.

### 5.3 Summary of analysis

In the following section we will provide a short summary of our analysis.

In the first part of our analysis, we found that respondents construct followership around 42 different codes and 12 different groups, consisting of *always voice opinions*, *be engaged*, *voice opinions within frame*, *be involved*, *share common purpose*, *have expertise*, *adhere to boundaries*, *be helpful and understanding*, *self-focused*, *be obedient*, *defer to leader*, and *characteristics*. Based on this, we concluded that the term followership holds a multiplicity of meaning, which is in line with Carsten et al.’s (2010) and Bresnen’s (1995) study. As most codes are classified as active, we concluded that followership is constructed in a highly active way. In contrast to Carsten et al.’s (2010) study, we found some codes that were not classifiable as passive, active or proactive. Moreover, as individuals do not construct followership coherently and refer to passive, active and proactive codes simultaneously, we reasoned that the three classifications of Carsten et al. (2010) are insufficient to capture the full complexity and meaning of followership.

In the second part of our study, we examined whether the role an individual and the organizational context cause differences in constructions of followership. We found that the role of the individual as

well as the organizational context have an impact on the constructions of followership. We argue that the role provides a particular frame of reference, as followers and leaders refer to different codes when constructing followership. Moreover, we identified four different components of the organizational context that lead to differences in constructions between HCC and CF. These components consist of the *state of the organization*, *the structure of the organization*, *the culture of the organization*, as well as the *specific preoccupation of the individual*.

## 6 Discussion

In this chapter, we will discuss our findings and their implications. First, we will question the applicability of Carsten et al.'s (2010) activity scale to our data. Second, we will discuss the different factors in the social construction process and their relevance. Third, additional factors impacting the social construction of followership will be presented. We conclude this chapter by discussing the enactment of followership.

### 6.1 Applicability of classifications

In this study we use the activity scale by Carsten et al. (2010) as a way to sort and analyze our data. By doing so, we find that followership is constructed in a highly active way, as people mostly refer to active codes when constructing followership. However, we also realize that the classifications by Carsten et al. (2010) are not sufficient to analyze our data. Carsten et al. (2010) present their classifications as clear cut, and categorize individuals' social constructions as either proactive or active or passive. However, we find that people refer to all of these classifications simultaneously when constructing followership. Additionally, we also identify one group, *characteristics*, that is not classifiable according to this scale, as the codes refer to neutral characteristics, such as *positive attitude*, *passionate about job*, *open-minded and creative*, etc. This implies that followership is more complex and more difficult to classify than along the activity scale, as presented by Carsten et al. (2010). We therefore argue that future research should aim for identifying other scales that represent followership constructions more comprehensively. However, due to the complexity and diversity of followership constructions, we can infer that they are not classifiable into scales or matrices.

## 6.2 Impact of influencing factors

Even though we conduct an explorative study and do not aim for analyzing in depth how strongly the respective factors are influencing the constructions, we want to pick up this discussion in the following section.

According to Uhl-Bien and Pillai (2007, in Shamir et al., 2007), schemas are developed through socialization and experiences. As individuals gain experiences of followership in different situations and contexts, they store varying repertoires of followership in their memory. These schemas are influenced by a different situations (Bresnen, 1995), ranging from early childhood to different work experiences and situations in private life, and are likely to clash overtime. However, instead of resolving these differences, the varying repertoires are stored in memory (Gilbert & Mulkay, 1984, in Talja 1999). Therefore, followership schemas consist of different repertoires and can thus be considered as broad. Due to the width of schemas, factors such as the organizational context and the role of the individual become more relevant when constructing followership, as they influence which repertoire individuals refer to when constructing followership. The schemas provide a basis for followership construction but surrounding factors, such as the organizational context and the role of the individual influence and contextualize the schema (Carsten et al., 2010).

When comparing the two factors, the role of the individual and the context of the organization, we argue that even though the role of the individual provides a point of reference for constructing followership, the organizational context influences the social construction more. This is based on the assumption that the role of an individual is more instable than the organizational context as individuals shift their roles multiple times during the day (Kelley, 1988). For instance, leaders often take on the position of a follower, when talking to their superiors (Lee, 1991). Followers on the other hand can take the position of a leader by steering meetings or projects. We can therefore conclude that individuals are not only familiar with both types of roles but experience them interchangeably. As a result, the role of the individual gets more blurry and when constructing followership individuals might shift between the perspectives of a leader or of a follower. In contrast to the role, the context of the organization can be said to be more stable. Even though individuals might change employers multiple times throughout their careers, they experience the different organizational contexts in sequence and not interchangeably. Therefore, the organizational context is likely to be more influential than the role of the individual when constructing followership.

Based on the discussion above, we conclude that the strongest impact on followership construction lies closer to the bottom of our framework, the organizational context. Additionally, as we recognize that individual's schemas are likely to be broad, we make the part of the figure that represents the schema larger than the parts that symbolize the individual's role or the organizational context.

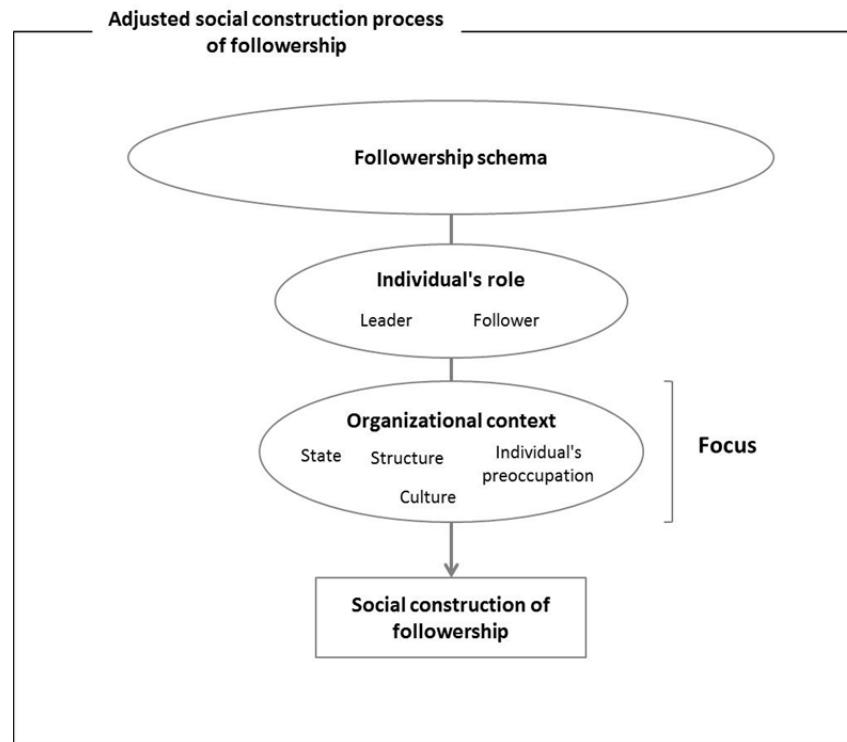


Figure 6 – Adjusted social construction process of followership

### 6.3 Additional factors influencing followership constructions

We identify that the role of the individual and the organizational context cause differences in followership constructions. More specifically, we find four different components of the organizational context that lead to differences in constructions between HCC and CF. These components consist of *the state of the organization*, *the structure of the organization*, *the culture of the organization* and *the specific preoccupation of the individual*. Even though we identify these factors, we acknowledge that there are likely to be other factors influencing the social constructions of followership. In the following, we will therefore discuss some of these factors that are described in existing literature.

As stated in the theoretical framework, Meindl (1995) argues that social constructions are generated by processes at the individual level and at the group level. According to Meindl (1995), social constructions are therefore a combination of these two processes. However, in this thesis the focus lies on the

individual level. Nevertheless, in line with Meindl (1995), we acknowledge that in addition to the individual level processes, social processes within groups might influence individual constructions. The group level processes arise out of the interactions among fellow group members (Meindl, 1995). We therefore expect that within the respective company, members of a group, such as departments or project teams influence each other's individual constructions of followership. Based on Meindl (1995), we thus assume that group level processes are likely to influence the social constructions of followership at HCC and CF.

Carsten et al. (2010) argue in their study that followership constructions are influenced by followership schema and contextual factors consisting of organizational climate and leadership style (Carsten et al., 2010, p. 546). These contextual factors differ from the ones that we identify in our study. According to Carsten et al. (2010), the organizational climate sets the tone of the organization and consists of either a hierarchical/bureaucratic work context or an empowering work climate. Leadership style on the other hand determines how much freedom is given to the employees (Carsten et al., 2010). It can either be empowering and supportive leadership or authoritarian (Carsten et al., 2010). In contrast, we identify the following components: *the state, the structure, and the culture of the organization* as well as the *preoccupation of the individual*. *The state of the organization* defines the condition of an organization, whether it is currently in stability or undergoing changes or a crisis (Porter & McLaughlin, 2006). In our study, *the state of the organization* refers to the changes that are taking place at HCC. *The structure of the organization* on the other hand characterizes the degree of formalization and centralization, and the hierarchical levels of individuals (Porter & McLaughlin, 2006). *The culture of the organization* for instance represents the underlying norms and values of the organization (Schein, 1990). Moreover, *the preoccupation of the individual* describes the specific tasks of the individual. Based on Carsten et al.'s (2010) study, we acknowledge organizational climate and leadership style as additional contextual components that, together with the components that we identify, are likely to influence the social constructions of followership.

## 6.4 Enactment of followership

According to Uhl-Bien and Pillai (2007, in Shamir et al., 2007), social constructions of followership provide cues on the enactment of followership. In the following, we will discuss the enactment of followership at HCC and CF.



The social constructions of followership we identify in our study provide details on how followership is enacted at HCC and CF. Overall, it can be noted that followers in both organizations are likely to behave in an active way. Due to the fact that most respondents describe speaking up as an important duty of a follower, it is likely that respondents raise their voice when encountering problems or issues at work. Moreover, as clear communication and honesty is mentioned often, it is reasonable to assume that followers at HCC and CF are communicating clearly and honestly with their leaders. Being responsible is also referred to repeatedly across interviews. Therefore, it is likely that followers take responsibility at both companies.

Even though we argue that followership constructions provide cues on the enactment of followership (Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007, in Shamir et al., 2007), we acknowledge that the actual enactment might be influenced by at least two factors that we have experienced during the interviews. First of all, we identify a general tendency among participants of our study to create an overly positive image of their own behavior. This finding is in line with Brown, Collins and Schmidt (1988) who state that all individuals strive to enhance their feelings of personal worth. Second, we find that, when constructing followership, some of the participants are influenced by followership literature and possibly also leadership literature. Since leadership and followership can be seen as a unity (Hollander, 1992; Heller & van Til, 1982), leadership literature can also influence perceptions of followership. Specifically, in one of our interviews, one respondent refers to an article about followership that he had read. When describing the behaviors and characteristics of a follower, he explicitly mentions behaviors and characteristics of followers that are discussed in the article. From this we infer that other participants might also be influenced by literature they have read, even though they do not explicitly mention it. We therefore question whether participants act upon their descriptions of followership or if they are biased by attempts to shape overly positive images of themselves, and/or describe literature they have read. It is thus important to not only draw conclusions regarding the enactment of followership based on social constructions, but also observe individuals in an organizational setting and study the actual enactment.

As argued in the theoretical framework, we view leadership and followership as a process. This implies that the enactment of followership is influenced by leaders' and followers' behaviors and characteristics (Küpers, 2007). Additionally, followership takes place in a specific situation, which is likely to influence the enactment (Carsten et al., 2010). For a follower to be effective it is likely that different situations demand different behaviors. For instance, in one situation it is most effective for a follower to behave in a proactive way, whereas in another situation it is best to be passive and follow the leader. Due to

followers' broad schemas, they are able to draw on several repertoires that are enabling them to construct and enact different follower behaviors. Perhaps we should not interpret this as a contradiction in construction but rather recognize that this could be caused by situational differences. The existing follower types presented in the theoretical framework do not consider this situational or contextual component but assume that a follower is either a sheep or an effective follower (Kelley, 1988), or withdrawn or impulsive (Zaleznik, 1965). The underlying assumption of these models is therefore a fixed and constant situation. We believe that this is, however not in line with reality.

## 7 Conclusion

In this chapter we will outline the conclusion of our thesis. We will first provide a general conclusion by briefly summarizing our main findings. We will then present the managerial implications and limitations of our study. We will conclude our thesis by presenting suggestions for future research.

The purpose of this thesis was to explore the meaning of followership and the factors that influence the social constructions of followership. We therefore addressed the following two overarching questions.

1. *What are leaders' and followers' social constructions of followership?*
2. *What factors influence the social constructions of leaders and followers?*

More specifically we broke down the second question into the following two sub-questions:

- c) *Does the role of the individual influence the social constructions of followership?*
- d) *Does the organizational context influence the social constructions of followership and in particular which components can be identified?*

We studied the questions in two Swedish organizations, one health care company and one management consulting firm. The study was based on previous research on social constructions of followership by Carsten et al. (2010), which we extended by also including leaders as constructors of followership.

Our results suggest that followership has been constructed around 12 different groups consisting of *always voice opinions, be engaged, voice opinions within frame, be involved, share common purpose, have expertise, adhere to boundaries, be helpful and understanding, self-focused, be obedient, defer to leader, and characteristics*. Moreover, we found that the term followership holds a multiplicity of meaning and is complex. Therefore, one can assume that followership schemas are broad. Our findings give rise to the conclusion that existing followership research has been too narrow and existing

classifications of follower types, such as the activity scale by Carsten et al. (2010), are insufficient to capture the full complexity and meaning of the term followership.

Moreover, we investigate several factors that influence the constructions of followership. Based on our study we found that both the role of the individual and the organizational context, have an impact on the constructions of followership. Within the organizational context we identified four particular components consisting of *the state of the organization*, *the structure*, and *the culture of the organization* as well as *the specific preoccupation of the individual*. Furthermore, we acknowledged that additional factors, beyond the ones we have identified, might also influence the social constructions of followership. We therefore discussed the contextual components leadership style and organizational climate, brought up by Carsten et al. (2010), and group level processes discussed by Meindl (1995). We argued that the followership constructions are influenced most by the contextual factors. This is based on the assumption that followership schemas are broad and enable varying constructions. Moreover, we discussed that the role of the individual is less influential than the organizational context as it is less stable than the context. From this we concluded that the influential focus is situated towards the bottom of our framework.

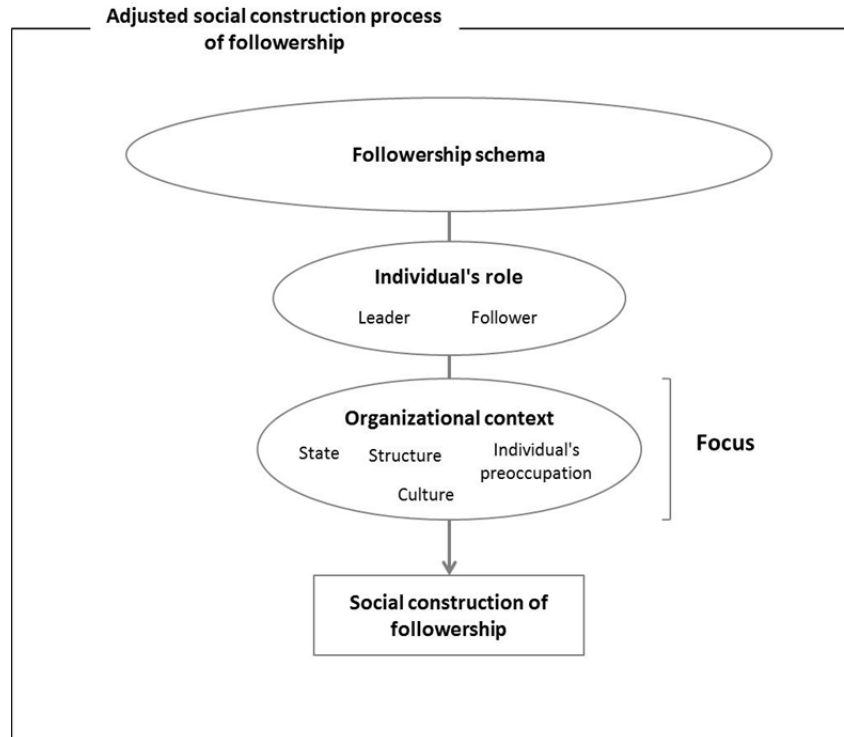


Figure 7 – Adjusted social construction process of followership

## 7.1 Theoretical implications

Our study contributes to management literature by exploring the meaning of followership from the perspective of leaders and followers, and by investigating factors that influence the social constructions of followership.

We extended the work by Carsten et al. (2010) by including leaders as constructors of followership, thereby achieving a more holistic understanding of followership. Our findings regarding the meaning of followership (i.e. multiplicity of meaning, complexity, active and inconsistent constructions) both substantiate but also criticize existing followership research. This provides new insights into the research topic of followership. Moreover, we advance existing research by presenting a framework on the process of social constructions of followership. As we identified new influencing factors (four components of the organizational context and the role of the individual), the framework is novel in its scope and serves as a basis for future research on social constructions.

## 7.2 Practical implications

Our findings offer insights to companies that are trying to improve their understanding of followership.

In our study we found that followership holds many meanings to leaders and followers. This multiplicity of meaning implies that being a follower is not simple and that it is potentially difficult for a follower to know what is expected of him or her. From this finding we can infer that it is necessary for organizations to discuss followership and the follower role more explicitly. This discussion should not be limited to simple job descriptions but rather outline how followers should behave and how they can best contribute as followers to the organization. The organization could therefore develop a concrete outline with guidelines and expectations on followers. This would make followership more concrete and thus simplify being a follower in the organization.

Contrary to the assumption that everyone knows how to be a follower (Agho, 2009), companies should acknowledge the fact that the follower role is ambiguous and challenging. Organizations could therefore support followers even more by providing specific follower training that teaches how to be an effective follower in a specific context.

Managers should be aware of the identified factors that influence the social constructions of followership, such as the four contextual components (*state, structure, culture of the organization and the preoccupation of the individual*) and the role of the individual. Since constructions of followership

provide cues on the enactment, managers can better comprehend constructions and followership action by acknowledging these components as influencing factors.

As leaders raised different aspects than followers when describing followership, it is possible that leaders' and followers' constructions of followership might differ or even collide. As social constructions of followership give cues on the enactment, these differences will manifest themselves in the daily interaction between leaders and followers. For instance, a proactive follower who constantly challenges his or her leader might be considered as pushy or disrespectful by a leader with a more passive construction of followership and vice versa. Differences in constructions of followership can therefore lead to conflicts between the follower and his or her leader. In order to avoid these types of conflicts, it is important for leaders and followers to exchange their understandings of followership and their ideas on ideal follower behaviors in the organizational context in question. Thereby differences in constructions can be revealed and approached. In order to institutionalize these dialogues in organizations, these discussions could be integrated in the yearly development talks between leaders and followers.

### **7.3 Limitations**

In this study we have identified three main areas of limitations: the generalizability of our study, biases in the data, as well as weaknesses in the coding process.

First, by limiting our study to two knowledge intensive organizations, we cannot ensure generalizability of our findings. In order to offset this limitation we could have increased the number of cases or the number of interviews beyond 20 to generate more data. However, due to the limited time frame of a master thesis, we were not able to do so.

Second, our data might be biased as interviews are subjective reflections of followers' and leaders' experiences and perspectives, rather than objective accounts of reality (Carsten et al., 2010). Moreover, due to difficulties in scheduling interviews, we gathered an uneven amount of interviews across HCC and CF and also across leaders and followers. This complicated the comparison between the two companies and between leaders and followers. Even though we tried to account for this imbalance in our analysis, it could have affected our data and led to an overemphasis of the parts that have been overrepresented in our study.

Third, limitations could also lie in the coding process. As we created the codes out of the transcriptions of our interviews, the codes are based on our interpretations of the data. This might be problematic, as we as researchers are biased. Moreover, we might have misinterpreted statements of respondents, created codes that are irrelevant or failed to recognize certain codes at all. Moreover, we could have falsely categorized groups into Carsten et al.'s (2010) classifications of passive, active and proactive and therefore come to false conclusions regarding the inconsistency. We tried to limit these factors by conducting the coding process individually and comparing and combining our codes subsequently.

Given the above mentioned limitations the findings of this study should be interpreted with care until the study has been replicated in a range of settings with several methodologies.

## 7.4 Avenues for future research

Based on the findings in our study and the limitations, we see several opportunities for future research.

First, the activity scale and classifications of Carsten et al. (2010) seem insufficient to structure our data. We could not classify all of our identified codes and found that in contrast to Carsten et al. (2010), respondents referred to all activity types. Therefore, we suggest that an area for future research could be to generate a new scale or classification that perhaps could better capture the full complexity of followership constructions.

Second, the factors that we identified, the impact of the role and the organizational context (consisting of *the state, the structure and the culture of the organization, and the preoccupation of the individual*) should be studied in more detail. More specifically, it would be beneficial to conduct a cause and effect analysis between social constructions and the identified factors. Thereby, one could make clearer predictions about the significance of the relationship between the variables. This would further validate the findings made in this explorative study. Moreover, in order to validate the additional factors based on Carsten et al. (2010) and Meindl (1995) it would be valuable to include these factors in the analysis.

Third, we elaborated in the discussion whether one of the factors, either the organizational context or the role of an individual, has a greater impact on the social constructions of followership. Based on the reasoning that individuals are shifting roles during the day, we hypothesized that the organizational context is likely to have a stronger impact on the constructions of followership than the role of the individual. In order to prove this reasoning, a quantitative analysis determining the influence of each factor could provide additional insights.

Fourth, we argue in line with different authors, such as Uhl-Bien and Pillai (2007, in Shamir et al., 2007) and Carsten et al. (2010) that social constructions of followership provide indications on the enactment of followership. As outlined in the discussion, we believe that there might have been a tendency among some participants to describe their own behaviors as followers in an overly positive way. Moreover, some of the respondents might also have referred to literature when constructing followership. We therefore suggest that future research complements the accounts constructed by individuals in interviews with observations in order to increase the understanding of followership enactment.

Finally, we propose, in line with Carsten et al. (2010) and Crossman and Crossman (2011), that future research on followership and more specifically followership constructions, takes cultural differences into account. As cultures socialize individuals it is likely that they influence followership schema and thus followership constructions. Hence, we call for a cross cultural perspective in future studies in order to determine the relevance of national culture.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A.1 – Interview protocols (followers)

#### Introduction

The purpose of our thesis is to explore how people look upon their roles in organizations. When answering the interview questions, we would like you to reflect on your role as a subordinate in this specific organization. We would like you to think about what you associate with the terms follower and followership and how you interact with the people in positions above you (leaders). **We want you to understand followership as behaviors of individuals acting in relation to a leader.**

All responses will be held strictly confidential. In order to capture all of your responses, we would like to record the interview. In addition, can we use some of your quotes from the interview under an anonymous pseudonym for our thesis?

#### Questions

<b>General information</b>	
	Name
	Position
	Division
	Employed at company
	Immediate superior/boss
	Job description
	Background (Education, previous work etc.)
<b>Leadership construction</b>	
	What are the responsibilities of a leader?
	What characteristics and behaviors do you associate with a leader?
<b>Followership construction</b>	
	What types of behaviors and characteristics do you associate with a follower?
	What does it mean to you to be a follower in this organization?
	What is a good follower?
	What is a bad follower?
	Is there a difference between a leader role versus a follower role? (If yes, why? If no, why



	not?)
	How do you behave as a follower?
	What are the responsibilities of a follower?
	What do leaders need from followers?
	What are your feelings towards the terms follower and followership? Positive, neutral or negative?
<b>Match and mismatch</b>	
	Do you have conflicts? Where do they come from?
	Do you agree with the leadership style of your leaders or superiors?
	Does your leader agree with your behavior and responsibilities? How do you notice that it is (not) accepted?
	Have there been difficulties with your leaders? If yes, please describe. If no, what is it that makes it work?
	What behavior among your leaders makes you frustrated?
<b>Concluding questions</b>	
	Is there anything else we should talk about regarding followership?
	Is there anything else we should know to understand how things are working here?

## Appendix A.2 – Interview protocols (leaders)

### Introduction

The purpose of our thesis is to explore how people look upon their roles in organizations. When answering the interview questions, we would like you to reflect on the role of a subordinate in this specific organization. Please take the perspective as a leader when answering our questions. We would like you to think about what you associate with the terms follower and followership and how you interact with the people in positions below you. **We want you to understand followership as behaviors of individuals acting in relation to a leader.**

All responses will be held strictly confidential. In order to capture all of your responses, we would like to record the interview. In addition, can we use some of your quotes from the interview under an anonymous pseudonym for our thesis?

### Questions

<b>General information</b>	
	Name
	Position
	Division
	Employed at company
	Immediate superior/boss
	Job description
	Background (Education, previous work etc.)
<b>Leadership construction</b>	
	What are the responsibilities of a leader?
	What characteristics and behaviors do you associate with a leader?
<b>Followership construction</b>	
	What types of behaviors and characteristics do you associate with a follower?
	What does being a follower in this organization mean?
	What is a good follower?
	What is a bad follower?
	Is there a difference between a leader role versus a follower role? (If yes, why? If no, why not?)

	How do you behave as a leader?
	What are the responsibilities of a follower?
	What are your feelings towards the terms follower and followership? Positive, neutral or negative?
<b>Match and mismatch</b>	
	Do you have conflicts? Where do they come from?
	Do you feel that your leadership style is accepted among your subordinates? If yes, how do you notice that it is accepted?
	Have there been difficulties with followers? If yes, please describe. If no, what is it that makes it work?
	Have there been difficulties with your leaders? If yes, please describe. If no, what is it that makes it work?
	What behavior among your followers makes you frustrated?
<b>Concluding questions</b>	
	Is there anything else we should talk about regarding followership?
	Is there anything else we should know to understand how things are working here?

## Appendix B – Overview of interviews

Company	Position	Name	Date of interview
Health Care Company	Follower	HCCF1	08.10.2012
Health Care Company	Follower	HCCF2	08.10.2012
Health Care Company	Follower	HCCF3	09.10.2012
Health Care Company	Follower	HCCF4	09.10.2012
Health Care Company	Follower	HCCF5	12.10.2012
Health Care Company	Follower	HCCF6	16.10.2012
Health Care Company	Follower	HCCF7	19.10.2012
Health Care Company	Leader	HCCL1	09.10.2012
Health Care Company	Leader	HCCL2	10.10.2012
Health Care Company	Leader	HCCL3	16.10.2012
Health Care Company	Leader	HCCL4	17.10.2012
Health Care Company	Leader	HCCL5	17.10.2012
Health Care Company	Leader	HCCL6	17.10.2012
Consulting Firm	Follower	CFF1	18.10.2012
Consulting Firm	Follower	CFF2	22.10.2012
Consulting Firm	Follower	CFF3	22.10.2012
Consulting Firm	Follower	CFF4	23.10.2012
Consulting Firm	Leader	CFL1	18.10.2012
Consulting Firm	Leader	CFL1	23.10.2012
Consulting Firm	Leader	CFL1	19.10.2012

## Appendix C.1 – Codification

Classification	Group	Code	Health Care Company (HCC)												Consulting Firm (CF)				Analysis																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																																						
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Proactive	Always voice opinions	Speaking up and questioning	HCCF1	HCCF2	HCCF3	HCCF4	HCCF5	HCCF6	HCCF7	HCC1.1	HCC1.2	HCC1.3	HCC1.4	HCC1.5	HCC1.6	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	CF2	CF3	CF4	CF1	

## Appendix C.2 – Overview of quotes

			Health Care Company (HCC)	
Classification	Group	Code	Followers	
			HCCF1	HCCF2
Proactive	Always voice opinions	Speaking up and questioning	-	"So its important to have impact as a follower and to have a space that you feel that you can say things and challenge and question your leader or yourself and not feel intimidated by that."
		Be courageous	-	-
		Influence to get your point through	"Being a follower, if I want my opinion through I need to present it in way that my boss wants it presented and the way he or she is evaluated."	"I change the way I question them. I don't stop questioning. I just change the way, so it's not that obvious. So I try to find ways to get through it somehow."
		Have integrity	-	-
	Be engaged	Be independent	-	-
		Take initiative	-	"Therefore a follower also needs to realize what needs to be done and do it."
Active	Voice opinions within frame	Communicate clearly	"It is quite important to take discussions one step down and making it very simple for people in discussions, (...) all types of communications." "Is that something that the leader should make sure that it happens?" "No, the follower, or basically all individuals in terms of whom they are communicating with (...)"	-
		Be honest	"So what do leaders need from their followers?" "(...) first of all they need honesty."	"(...) so it's very important to speak out your mind and not be afraid of anything that hinders your job. You have to say what you think and don't be afraid of it."
		Speaking up within frame	"A (...) good follower needs to have the sense of when to just do things and when to say I do not think that this is a good idea (...) and that is a tricky part of being an efficient follower I think as well to realize when to say no and when to just pull through."	-
		Choose your battles	"You have to choose your battles."	-
	Be involved	Be responsible	"I think you need quite a clear picture of what your responsibilities are and that is what you should require as a follower (...)"	"I think a bad follower is someone who thinks that his or her leader should do everything."
		Be solution-oriented	"Given the fact that you have some sort of mandate also take the issue and deliver a suggestion to a solution (...) we have three options to solve this issue, 1,2 and 3 and I think number 1 is the best."	"A bad follower is a person who sees the problem, the first thing they see and nags about it the entire time. And is not willing to do anything themselves to change it."
		Do a good job	-	-
		Take part in decision making	-	-
	Share common purpose	Know how to contribute to goal	-	-
		Share overall goal	-	-
	Have expertise	Have expert knowledge	-	"But they hire for example me because I have some specific knowledge that they don't have."
	Adhere to boundaries	Adhere to your frame	-	-
		Make own decisions within frame	-	-
		Accept that leader has final say	"(...) she said well I do not care about your view (...) so we are gonna go this way anyway. That is the piece as a a follower you just have to accept (...). She is the boss and I have to accept it (...)"	"A follower is (...) wants to achieve whatever the leader wants to achieve. Because at the end of the day it really is the leader who directs the way and sets the goals for the team."
	Be helpful and understanding	Be empathic (make life easier for leader)	"(...) being a good follower to make day to day life easier for your leader (...)"	"A good follower is someone who understands the leader's role and helps the leader to achieve it."
		Be a good colleague	-	-
		Be a team player	"And probably (...) the general in terms of team players as well (...)"	-
	Self-focused	Be self-aware	-	-
		Willing to develop	-	-
Passive	Be obedient	Do your job	"And that is probably the key for a bad follower, if just 5 of them are done. And that probably is the number one of being a bad follower, not completing tasks you are given."	"Everything comes down to do your job, I would say."
		Follow decisions once made	-	-
		Be loyal	" (...) in a professional environment if you are a follower you need to follow the board (...) if they decide in the end to change the CEO that is a good thing for me."	-
	Defer to leader	Adjust behavior to leader	-	-
		Listen to leader	-	"If I was a leader and had someone following me then I would want that person to listen to me (...). But to listen and understand where my point of view comes from."
		Leader makes decision	-	-
		Follow the leader	-	"Leaders need from their followers to follow them. They need them to pay attention and really do what they are told to do. Not necessarily by a leader but maybe also by a group."
		Respect authority	-	-
No label	Characteristics	Professional	"You do not go around talking too much bull shit."	"But all this nagging and personal thing, I think that followers need to put that aside and come to work just with a business mind and work. And try to see everything clearly."
		Positive attitude	-	"A follower is (...) someone who is enthusiastic (...)"
		High demands on self	-	"They want to achieve excellence at what they do."
		Humble	-	-
		Followers behaviors resemble leaders behaviors	-	-
		No back stabbing	-	-
		Passionate about job	-	"A good follower is someone that comes to work and you can see it in their eyes and they like what they do and they want to do the best at their job."
		Ambition	-	-
		Open-minded and creative	-	"And you need to also sometimes read outside the box, you can't only see in one certain direction(...)"

			Health Care Company (HCC)	
			Follower	
Classification	Group	Code	HCCF3	HCCF4
Proactive	Always voice opinions	Speaking up and questioning	"I do like people who oppose. I like a free debate in the work."	-
		Be courageous	-	-
		Influence to get your point through	-	-
		Have integrity	-	-
	Be engaged	Be independent	-	"I think my role is very much like my boss in a smaller scale."
		Take initiative	-	-
Active	Voice opinions within frame	Communicate clearly	-	"[...] needs the follower to communicate, needs that the follower maybe teams up and finds synergy."
		Be honest	"I think she demands honest followers. I think she would not be so nice if she would discover followers hiding or being kind of illoyal."	-
		Speaking up within frame	-	-
		Choose your battles	-	-
	Be involved	Be responsible	-	"And on the other hand what is a bad follower?" "Someone who doesn't take responsibilities." "I think that feeling responsible for your own actions and what should be done is an important quality."
		Be solution-oriented	-	"[...] be able to make decisions, not always go to your boss. Solution oriented."
		Do a good job	-	-
		Take part in decision making	-	"But I don't see her as my boss. In 99% of the time I see her as a team member. (...) its more that we work together towards the goal and that I can make my own decision [...]."
	Share common purpose	Know how to contribute to goal	-	-
		Share overall goal	-	-
	Have expertise	Have expert knowledge	"As I am a senior advisor I do not expect my leader to be the same expert but she or he has to take my knowledge (...) I would not like her to be better than me in my field."	-
	Adhere to boundaries	Adhere to your frame	-	-
		Make own decisions within frame	-	"I can make my own decision within this frame and she of course sets the frame. But I have the possibility to have my own way."
		Accept that leader has final say	-	-
	Be helpful and understanding	Be empathic (make life easier for leader)	-	-
		Be a good colleague	-	-
		Be a team player	-	"I didn't see myself as a follower. I see myself as a team member."
	Self-focused	Be self-aware	-	-
		Willing to develop	-	-
Passive	Be obedient	Do your job	-	"And what does a leader need from a follower?" "That the follower has control and has planned their work. Get the results."
		Follow decisions once made	"The most important thing, when we have made a decision is to follow that."	-
		Be loyal	"Loyalty is very important I think. Not for its own sake but to maintain and to gain results I think it is a very important thing to be loyal to decisions made."	-
	Defer to leader	Adjust behavior to leader	-	-
		Listen to leader	-	-
		Leader makes decision	"The manager makes the decision but the followers' task is to report when decisions are contradicting or not working."	-
		Follow the leader	"That is why we have leaders. To point out the way, where to go."	-
		Respect authority	-	-
No label	Characteristics	Professional	-	-
		Positive attitude	"And humor is a very good base to work on."	-
		High demands on self	-	-
		Humble	-	"[...] be able to put the prestige aside [...]."
		Followers behaviors resemble leaders behaviors	-	"I try to reach out to so many in the organization and give them order. So its maybe I don't know, maybe it's like my boss; she has cloned us, or something."
		No back stabbing	-	-
		Passionate about job	-	-
		Ambition	-	-
		Open-minded and creative	-	"[...] give different ideas and solutions."

			Health Care Company (HCC)	
			Follower	
Classification	Group	Code	HCCF5	HCCF6
Proactive	Always voice opinions	Speaking up and questioning	"The responsibility is to follow but then always sometimes to question when the leadership is wrong."	"I think sometimes to tell the leader that something is going wrong. If you think that the leader is going in the wrong direction."
		Be courageous	-	-
		Influence to get your point through	-	-
		Have integrity	-	"[...] that you can stay true to your own beliefs and if you feel that you would end up in a position that you can stand up for your own beliefs than you should leave, I think."
	Be engaged	Be independent	-	"I like it because you can act very independently."
		Take initiative	-	-
Active	Voice opinions within frame	Communicate clearly	"She always knows that I do my deliveries on time (...) and sometimes if I can't that I let my boss know."	"We have very open dialogue it is very easy to communicate and express your view on things."
		Be honest	"Feedback and the honesty. The leader needs to know that if there is something they will tell me." "A bad follower is someone that doesn't deliver and who doesn't tell it. Don't do what they are supposed to do and not saying it."	"Someone that can be very frank and say when you are going in the wrong direction and also someone that says good."
		Speaking up within frame	-	-
		Choose your battles	-	-
	Be involved	Be responsible	"A bad follower is someone that puts their stuff into other people's hands and needs to be saved all the time."	-
		Be solution-oriented	-	-
		Do a good job	-	-
		Take part in decision making	-	"Followers can influence decision making quite a lot. They can dictate the decision."
	Share common purpose	Know how to contribute to goal	-	-
		Share overall goal	-	-
	Have expertise	Have expert knowledge	-	"The leader can not have such thorough knowledge in all areas and they seek advice from the specialist functions, like HR or marketing, legal and so on."
	Adhere to boundaries	Adhere to your frame	"Take responsibility for your responsibilities but not try to takeover everything. You have to know your place."	-
		Make own decisions within frame	-	-
		Accept that leader has final say	"I know my position and I can question my leader but if my leader says this is the way its going to be then this is the way its going to be."	-
	Be helpful and understanding	Be empathic (make life easier for leader)	-	-
		Be a good colleague	-	-
		Be a team player	-	-
	Self-focused	Be self-aware	-	-
		Willing to develop	-	-
Passive	Be obedient	Do your job	"That means that my boss should never worry if I do my job or not. She always knows that I do my deliveries on time and that I do them with care."	-
		Follow decisions once made	-	-
		Be loyal	-	"For me its more important that you have the loyalty as such. (...) I have my loyalty for the company."
	Defer to leader	Adjust behavior to leader	"[It] depends on the boss. As a follower you have to adapt. That is also a quality for a good follower, flexibility and a matter of smile and move forward and adapt."	"Maybe that you adjust your behavior to the characteristics of the leader. That's what I come to think of. That you little bit adjust."
		Listen to leader	"But a follower should listen to what the boss says and do the job."	-
		Leader makes decision	"Yes, the leader takes the decisions and the follower makes them happen."	-
		Follow the leader	"The follower can always hide behind the leader."	"The leader is in the front, the person holding the flag. Whereas the followers are the people following."
		Respect authority	-	-
No label	Characteristics	Professional	-	"[...] not disloyalty against individuals, especially when the organization goes through a lot of changes."
		Positive attitude	"You have to keep (...) up the spirit (...)."	-
		High demands on self	-	-
		Humble	"You have (...) to be more humble (...)."	-
		Followers behaviors resemble leaders behaviors	-	-
		No back stabbing	-	-
		Passionate about job	-	-
		Ambition	"Someone can be a very strong follower because that person has a go in himself or herself (...)."	-
		Open-minded and creative	-	-



			Health Care Company (HCC)	
Classification	Group	Code	Health Care Company (HCC)	Health Care Company (HCC)
			Follower HCCF7	Leader HCC11
Proactive	Always voice opinions	Speaking up and questioning	"But also question the manager and the organization and give tips (...)."	"[...] and it is important to have people around you that do not say yes to everything I say. I want people to say what they think. I want them to challenge me I want to have a lot of discussions."
		Be courageous	-	"I think a good follower has the courage to be honest and to ask for help (...)."
		Influence to get your point through	-	-
		Have integrity	-	"[...] and its strictly business but you need to behave with a sense of moral and ethics."
	Be engaged	Be independent	"That you do not (...) just because I have a manager I do not buy into everything she says rather I try to work independently as well."	"So you think that followers should also be able to make decisions on their own without having their boss tell them? Definitely that is the best."
		Take initiative	-	-
Active	Voice opinions within frame	Communicate clearly	-	"When they obviously need help they should say it because that is so important. We can solve anything but first we need to know about it and then the person that asks for help needs to take it."
		Be honest	"[...] you cannot just be unhappy in quiet rather you should say what you are feeling. Be open and honest towards your manager."	"I think a good follower has the courage to be honest and to ask for help (...)."
		Speaking up within frame	-	-
		Choose your battles	-	-
	Be involved	Be responsible	-	-
		Be solution-oriented	"Not just be negative so that if you have something that you think needs to be changed you also need to give tips and ideas on how you should be able to change things."	"I want (...) people with ideas that can take the ideas and can do something with them."
		Do a good job	-	-
		Take part in decision making	-	-
	Share common purpose	Know how to contribute to goal	-	-
		Share overall goal	-	"[...] that you act in a way that takes you to the company's goals. If you do that then you can be a follower in your own ways. But a follower would do what is right for the company."
	Have expertise	Have expert knowledge	-	"And it is important that everyone is doing at what they are best"
	Adhere to boundaries	Adhere to your frame	-	-
		Make own decisions within frame	-	-
		Accept that leader has final say	-	-
	Be helpful and understanding	Be empathic (make life easier for leader)	-	-
		Be a good colleague	"And being a good coworker, that means also towards your colleagues (...)."	-
		Be a team player	-	-
	Self-focused	Be self-aware	-	-
		Willing to develop	-	-
Passive	Be obedient	Do your job	"Of course to do your work as well as possible." "To perform the work that is expected of me and the tasks that I get from my manager."	-
		Follow decisions once made	-	"You want people to be honest and confront you when something is wrong but if you make a decision then they have to go along with that."
		Be loyal	-	"I think it is important to also be loyal."
	Defer to leader	Adjust behavior to leader	-	-
		Listen to leader	-	-
		Leader makes decision	-	"[...] you are not allowed to set your own goals."
		Follow the leader	-	-
		Respect authority	-	-
No label	Characteristics	Professional	"But also to be unhappy quietly or to talk badly about your employers overall or about your boss. Spreading a bad atmosphere."	"But there is one thing that I don't tolerate is talking bad about each other and not being there for one another."
		Positive attitude	"[...] and have a positive attitude."	-
		High demands on self	-	-
		Humble	-	-
		Followers behavior resemble leaders behaviors	-	-
		No back stabbing	-	"[...] there are a couple of people (...) (that) loop around me. That is something you can't do that as an employee and you can't do that as a leader."
		Passionate about job	-	-
		Ambition	-	-
		Open-minded and creative	"[...] and give tips, not just question but also then bring new ideas in that case."	"I want different kinds of personalities, people with ideas that can take the ideas and can do something with them."

			Health Care Company (HCC)	
			Leader	
Classification	Group	Code	HCC2	HCC3
Proactive	Always voice opinions	Speaking up and questioning	"Above all input. What is going on around them. What issues they have and it is very important that I get them to tell me what is going on. Otherwise the wrong decision can be made (...)."	"They have to give me some resistance that is very important to me."
		Be courageous	-	"(...) a good follower is somebody that shows respect for the authority but is not afraid of it."
		Influence to get your point through	-	-
		Have integrity	-	-
	Be engaged	Be independent	"(...) they should be fairly independent."	-
		Take initiative	-	-
Active	Voice opinions within frame	Communicate clearly	"Especially inform me about what is going on. (...) I always want to know what is going on."	"It is important to have a dialogue."
		Be honest	"(...) inform me about what is going on. So that it does not come as a nice surprise 2 weeks later that a lot of things have happened that I do not know about."	"But we have done the hot chair where they hit me. Other way I don't know what they think."
		Speaking up within frame	-	-
		Choose your battles	-	-
	Be involved	Be responsible	"You have a lot of own responsibility and that is what is important (...)."	"What do you as a leader need from your followers?" "That they take responsibilities and solve the problem (...)."
		Be solution-oriented	"You have to be very solution oriented so that you do not just sit down and whine but actually do stuff. So that you are positive and solution oriented. That is important."	"That they take responsibilities and solve the problems (...)."
		Do a good job	-	-
		Take part in decision making	"(...) in my case most decisions take place in the group with the 4 region managers. So it is often a group who is involved and deciding (...)."	-
	Share common purpose	Know how to contribute to goal	-	-
		Share overall goal	-	-
	Have expertise	Have expert knowledge	"Often they should have maybe a front edge competence that I do not always have."	"If I hire someone I would expect him or her to often exceed me in knowledge in his or her specific area."
	Adhere to boundaries	Adhere to your frame	-	-
		Make own decisions within frame	"But of course they can make their own decisions. Up to a certain level."	-
	Be helpful and understanding	Accept that leader has final say	"They do not believe in the idea, that they can say, but they anyway have to do what they are told and then time will tell who is right and sure everyone can be right and wrong."	"You can argue with me to some point but then I will say king is stronger than bishop, now is enough. And I would expect that they show loyalty as we go out of the conference room."
		Be empathic (make life easier for leader)	-	They are there to help me with their knowledge and expertise.
		Be a good colleague	-	"(...) good follower is very helpful (...)."
		Be a team player	-	"And it takes quite some long time to establish that in a group so that people don't say that is not my table, that is not my fault and that is good follower is very helpful but also knows what is when he or she is helpful."
	Self-focused	Be self-aware	-	-
		Willing to develop	-	-
Passive	Be obedient	Do your job	That you do what you are supposed to do. Follows what you are told to do. That is number 1.	-
		Follow decisions once made	"Everybody really have to what they are supposed to do. So that not everybody runs off on their own races the whole time. That will only lead to chaos in the end."	-
		Be loyal	-	"(...) very important that they are loyal as a whole and also loyal to the team and me (...)."
	Defer to leader	Adjust behavior to leader	"There is always someone who directs you. So you always have to adjust yourself to the hierarchy somehow."	-
		Listen to leader	-	-
		Leader makes decision	-	-
		Follow the leader	-	-
		Respect authority	-	-
No label	Characteristics	Professional	-	-
		Positive attitude	"What is a good follower?" "Positive of course (...)."	"And a good follower is also someone who creates that good atmosphere (...) but making the culture and adding to it instead of sucking from it."
		High demands on self	-	-
		Humble	-	"Within my division (...) they don't have that much prestige (...)."
		Followers behaviors resemble leaders behaviors	-	-
		No back stabbing	-	"Back stabbing and disloyalty to the firm and to me at the leader. If it is a back stabbing behavior and you go past me without telling me. (...) But if they would go and complain without saying something to me (...) that would very upset me (...)."
		Passionate about job	-	"Within (...) department you have to like and live your work. It has to be passion and try to make that."
		Ambition	-	"(...) some ambition that's what I like. And its not always making the career ambition in becoming the leader also the ambition in becoming the best could be a specialist ambition. So that you have a motor and drive."
		Open-minded and creative	"But the company is dependent on creativity and ideas and that applies to everyone in the company, it does not only apply to the leader but to everyone."	"And I would expect that they could also look outside their box."

			Health Care Company (HCC)	
			Leader	
Classification	Group	Code	HCC2	HCC3
Proactive	Always voice opinions	Speaking up and questioning	"Above all input. What is going on around them. What issues they have and it is very important that I get them to tell me what is going on. Otherwise the wrong decision can be made (...)."	"They have to give me some resistance that is very important to me."
		Be courageous	-	"(...) a good follower is somebody that shows respect for the authority but is not afraid of it."
		Influence to get your point through	-	-
		Have integrity	-	-
	Be engaged	Be independent	"(...) they should be fairly independent."	-
		Take initiative	-	-
Active	Voice opinions within frame	Communicate clearly	"Especially inform me about what is going on. (...) I always want to know what is going on."	"It is important to have a dialogue."
		Be honest	"(...) inform me about what is going on. So that it does not come as a nice surprise 2 weeks later that a lot of things have happened that I do not know about."	"But we have done the hot chair where they hit me. Other way I don't know what they think."
		Speaking up within frame	-	-
		Choose your battles	-	-
	Be involved	Be responsible	"You have a lot of own responsibility and that is what is important (...)."	"What do you as a leader need from your followers?" "That they take responsibilities and solve the problem (...)."
		Be solution-oriented	"You have to be very solution oriented so that you do not just sit down and whine but actually do stuff. So that you are positive and solution oriented. That is important."	"That they take responsibilities and solve the problems (...)."
		Do a good job	-	-
		Take part in decision making	"(...) in my case most decisions take place in the group with the 4 region managers. So it is often a group who is involved and deciding (...)."	-
	Share common purpose	Know how to contribute to goal	-	-
		Share overall goal	-	-
	Have expertise	Have expert knowledge	"Often they should have maybe a front edge competence that I do not always have."	"If I hire someone I would expect him or her to often exceed me in knowledge in his or her specific area."
	Adhere to boundaries	Adhere to your frame	-	-
		Make own decisions within frame	"But of course they can make their own decisions. Up to a certain level."	-
	Be helpful and understanding	Accept that leader has final say	"They do not believe in the idea, that they can say, but they anyway have to do what they are told and then time will tell who is right and sure everyone can be right and wrong."	"You can argue with me to some point but then I will say king is stronger than bishop, now is enough. And I would expect that they show loyalty as we go out of the conference room."
		Be empathic (make life easier for leader)	-	They are there to help me with their knowledge and expertise.
		Be a good colleague	-	"(...) good follower is very helpful (...)."
		Be a team player	-	"And it takes quite some long time to establish that in a group so that people don't say that is not my table, that is not my fault and that is good follower is very helpful but also knows what is when he or she is helpful."
	Self-focused	Be self-aware	-	-
		Willing to develop	-	-
Passive	Be obedient	Do your job	That you do what you are supposed to do. Follows what you are told to do. That is number 1.	-
		Follow decisions once made	"Everybody really have to what they are supposed to do. So that not everybody runs off on their own races the whole time. That will only lead to chaos in the end."	-
		Be loyal	-	"(...) very important that they are loyal as a whole and also loyal to the team and me (...)."
	Defer to leader	Adjust behavior to leader	"There is always someone who directs you. So you always have to adjust yourself to the hierarchy somehow."	-
		Listen to leader	-	-
		Leader makes decision	-	-
		Follow the leader	-	-
		Respect authority	-	-
No label	Characteristics	Professional	-	-
		Positive attitude	"What is a good follower?" "Positive of course (...)."	"And a good follower is also someone who creates that good atmosphere (...) but making the culture and adding to it instead of sucking from it."
		High demands on self	-	-
		Humble	-	"Within my division (...) they don't have that much prestige (...)."
		Followers behaviors resemble leaders behaviors	-	-
		No back stabbing	-	"Back stabbing and disloyalty to the firm and to me at the leader. If it is a back stabbing behavior and you go past me without telling me. (...) But if they would go and complain without saying something to me (...) that would very upset me (...)."
		Passionate about job	-	"Within (...) department you have to like and live your work. It has to be passion and try to make that."
		Ambition	-	"(...) some ambition that's what I like. And its not always making the career ambition in becoming the leader also the ambition in becoming the best could be a specialist ambition. So that you have a motor and drive."
		Open-minded and creative	"But the company is dependent on creativity and ideas and that applies to everyone in the company, it does not only apply to the leader but to everyone."	"And I would expect that they could also look outside their box."

			Health Care Company (HCC)	
			Leader	
Classification	Group	Code	HCCL4	HCCL5
Proactive	Always voice opinions	Speaking up and questioning	"I think it is important that you speak up when you think that something is not working. That you have responsibility to signal (that)."	"It is communication that you talk about what is good and what is not good and what can become better."
		Be courageous	"[...] has own ideas and not afraid to say what they think"	-
		Influence to get your point through	-	-
		Have integrity	-	-
	Be engaged	Be independent	"[...] and that you just not only expect that others tell you what to do rather you have a joint responsibility in the group."	"[...] but I think there are also a lot of possibilities to shape both tasks and work(...)"
		Take initiative	-	-
Active	Voice opinions within frame	Communicate clearly	"[...] they should contact me I need to be contacted continuously to know what they are up to in the groups."	"[...] to have such a direct and open communication is of course very important. Because otherwise you cannot reach a goal."
		Be honest	"I want to know what is happening and how they feel and what they think and feedback when I say something I do not want everyone to say yes yes. I want them to tell me what they think."	"I think you need to be pretty open." "There is really only one thing [...], which makes me really frustrated, and that is if you say that things are done and then they are not."
		Speaking up within frame	-	-
		Choose your battles	-	-
	Be involved	Be responsible	"[...] you have a joint responsibility in the group."	"A lot of responsibility taking that is a prerequisite today (...). But I think that a good one is someone who has the possibility to focus on his or her own area of responsibility and fill that space fully."
		Be solution-oriented	-	-
		Do a good job	-	-
		Take part in decision making	"But it does not have to be my decision sometimes we decide together in the group."	-
	Share common purpose	Know how to contribute to goal	-	-
		Share overall goal	"[...] to know our core values and I think it is important to know the goals of the [...] the units' goals and the whole company's goals."	"[...] of course very very important as a follower and as a leader that you understand what the goal is and what it is that we are supposed to achieve."
	Have expertise	Have expert knowledge	"(As a leader) You have to be more distant from the reality. You do not have the details any more."	"[...] It takes a lot of understanding for what you are doing."
	Adhere to boundaries	Adhere to your frame	-	-
		Make own decisions within frame	-	-
		Accept that leader has final say	-	-
	Be helpful and understanding	Be empathic (make life easier for leader)	-	"There are these quite funny little books about how do I make my manager's life easier? And then I am maybe not thinking for the manager personally but how can I facilitate so that we actually reach our goals."
		Be a good colleague	-	-
		Be a team player	"I think it is a team work. I think it is very important that you know your group and that you respect them."	"[...] be able to interact with the surrounding world [...] colleagues [...]."
	Self-focused	Be self-aware	-	-
		Willing to develop	"What is a good follower?" "I[...] willing to develop [...]."	-
Passive	Be obedient	Do your job	"What is a bad follower?" "if you do not keep the deadlines or do not do as we have decided and [...]."	"[...] to perform the tasks and assignments that you understand that you have gotten."
		Follow decisions once made	"But if we decide something I think it is very important that everyone follows it and keep the deadlines and so on."	-
		Be loyal	What is a good follower?" "Loyal and willing to develop..."	-
	Defer to leader	Adjust behavior to leader	-	-
		Listen to leader	-	-
		Leader makes decision	-	-
		Follow the leader	-	-
		Respect authority	-	-
No label	Characteristics	Professional	"What is a bad follower?" "Someone who speaks about their colleagues and the company and smiles when the boss arrives."	-
		Positive attitude	-	-
		High demands on self	-	-
		Humble	-	-
		Followers behaviors resemble leaders behaviors	-	-
		No back stabbing	-	-
		Passionate about job	-	-
		Ambition	-	-
		Open-minded and creative	"[...] that has own ideas [...]." "And that you push the development (forward), bring your own ideas [...]."	-

			Health Care Company (HCC)	Consulting Firm (CF)
Classification	Group	Code	Leader HCC L6	Follower CF F1
Proactive	Always voice opinions	Speaking up and questioning	"If they don't agree they say it, hopefully. If they not, then it is a problem, then you have the yes sayers that do not agree that just say yes. That is horrible situation."	"That they question if they disagree on something." "If you disagree with the direction that you are going then you should absolutely tell and challenge. But you shouldn't act in the opposite direction without telling."
		Be courageous	"[...] the worst thing that can happen is that people are afraid of conflicts and that's the worst that can happen."	"I mean a good follower is someone who dares to challenge."
		Influence to get your point through	-	-
		Have integrity	"I really like employees that are having integrity so that say the things that they want to say [...]."	-
	Be engaged	Be independent	-	-
		Take initiative	-	"[...] take initiative and try to communicate with my leaders as much as possible."
Active	Voice opinions within frame	Communicate clearly	-	"Good communication, confirmation... Yes. Also confirm that you understand what he or she is saying and if you don't understand then you should say that."
		Be honest	"That you don't have a second agenda and they are saying yes but meaning no. That they are honest." "[...] if you are not reaching the goals in time, tell me."	-
		Speaking up within frame	-	-
		Choose your battles	-	-
	Be involved	Be responsible	-	-
		Be solution-oriented	-	-
		Do a good job	-	-
		Take part in decision making	-	"The leader has the responsibility that decisions are made and so on but on the other he can't do it on its own, the team has to contribute to that. So it is everyone's responsibility but the leader is the one accountable for it."
	Share common purpose	Know how to contribute to goal	-	"I would expect that the followers [...] know what is expected of them."
		Share overall goal	"[...] they understand their contribution then it is more about we are going to do this and the overall objective of the company is this in 2 years [...]." "To do the things that we agreed upon."	"What is a bad follower?" "Someone who just acts on its own without making sure that everyone is in the same direction."
	Have expertise	Have expert knowledge	"They have the position because they know how to do it. So if I go in and interfere with their choices on a detailed basis then they would just quit."	-
	Adhere to boundaries	Adhere to your frame	-	-
		Make own decisions within frame	-	-
		Accept that leader has final say	-	-
	Be helpful and understanding	Be empathic (make life easier for leader)	-	-
		Be a good colleague	-	-
		Be a team player	-	-
	Self-focused	Be self-aware	-	-
		Willing to develop	"So if they would like to develop me or learn something new and that interacts with the objectives of the company then you have the perfect situation."	-
Passive	Be obedient	Do your job	-	-
		Follow decisions once made	"For me and hopefully for my employees you really have to shake hands on the overall objective and what to do."	-
		Be loyal	"They make things that are good for the company and themselves."	-
	Defer to leader	Adjust behavior to leader	-	-
		Listen to leader	-	-
		Leader makes decision	-	-
		Follow the leader	-	-
No label	Characteristics	Respect authority	-	"If you are in a meeting there is one person responsible for the meeting then it is rude to take over and lead the meeting. You have to let the leader lead."
		Professional	-	-
		Positive attitude	-	-
		High demands on self	-	-
		Humble	-	-
		Followers behaviors resemble leaders behaviors	-	-
		No back stabbing	-	-
		Passionate about job	-	-
		Ambition	-	-
		Open-minded and creative	-	-

			Consulting Firm (CF)	
			Follower	
Classification	Group	Code	CFF2	CFF3
Proactive	Always voice opinions	Speaking up and questioning	"If you disagree then I think it is your responsibility to say that."	"Also of course asking questions and saying their point of view when its going in the wrong way."
		Be courageous	-	-
		Influence to get your point through	-	-
		Have integrity	-	-
	Be engaged	Be independent	"[...] if I were a formal leader that a bad follower came to me all the time and ask me all the time what should I do."	"Then you would be very dependent on the leader who would need to be a superman or superwoman. So a good follower would be who shares the responsibility of the whole business."
		Take initiative	-	-
Active	Voice opinions within frame	Communicate clearly	-	-
		Be honest	-	-
		Speaking up within frame	-	-
		Choose your battles	"Pick your fights. I think that is very important (...) What is the issue about for real, has it something to do with me personally or is this really an issue."	-
	Be involved	Be responsible	"Because with our specific work it is very important that you are self-going and that you take on own responsibility." "You take on much more responsibility to actually want to do a good job."	"So a good follower would be who shares the responsibility of the whole business."
		Be solution-oriented	-	-
		Do a good job	-	-
		Take part in decision making	-	-
	Share common purpose	Know how to contribute to goal	-	"I think a follower (...) understands (...) in what way he or she should act to contribute to the common goal."
		Share overall goal	-	"I think a follower would be a person that also understands the whole picture (...)"
	Have expertise	Have expert knowledge	-	-
	Adhere to boundaries	Adhere to your frame	-	-
		Make own decisions within frame	-	-
		Accept that leader has final say	-	-
	Be helpful and understanding	Be empathic (make life easier for leader)	"That's a good thing when you are a follower, so that you don't sit and wait because that makes it hard to be a leader as well."	"You can never expect a formal leader to be perfect so you always need followers that help creating the structure and the goals and the meaning and the vision and mission."
		Be a good colleague	-	"And of course doing my part of the job but also understanding if my part is done and I have other colleagues that need my help it is also my job to help them if I can, contribute to our common goals."
		Be a team player	-	"being able to listen and to cooperate with the other team members."
	Self-focused	Be self-aware	"A person with good knowledge about self. If you have good contact with your own reactions and why you are doing things."	-
		Willing to develop	-	-
Passive	Be obedient	Do your job	-	"And of course doing my part of the job (...)"
		Follow decisions once made	-	-
		Be loyal	-	-
	Defer to leader	Adjust behavior to leader	-	-
		Listen to leader	-	-
		Leader makes decision	-	-
		Follow the leader	-	-
		Respect authority	"What does a leader need from followers" "Acceptance to be a leader."	-
No label	Characteristics	Professional	-	-
		Positive attitude	"And humor I think is very important."	-
		High demands on self	"My belief is that if you are doing a good job and you are satisfied with yourself and you are working in a way that makes you the best you then you are a good employee both for the company and the leader."	-
		Humble	-	-
		Followers behavior resemble leaders behaviors	"I think all the things between a leader and a follower you can switch them, except the responsibility of the leader for the whole business. But I think as far as characteristics I think you can switch them, they are the same."	-
		No back stabbing	-	-
		Passionate about job	-	"It is, I am a follower and a co worker I am not one of the founders but it is very important for me to feel like I choose to work here then I need to contribute every day. When I stop feeling that I want to do that then I need to work somewhere else."
		Ambition	"People here are very motivated and driven and we all here want to achieve something."	-
		Open-minded and creative	"And I try to put suggestions for further development for the company out to my leader and my colleagues."	-

			Consulting Firm (CF)	
Classification	Group	Code	Follower CF4	Leader CF1
Proactive	Always voice opinions	Speaking up and questioning	"I think also that a follower needs to be constructive dissent."	"[...]question when needed or question whenever."
		Be courageous	-	-
		Influence to get your point through	-	-
		Have integrity	-	-
	Be engaged	Be independent	-	-
		Take initiative	"I think a follower needs to be proactive."	-
Active	Voice opinions within frame	Communicate clearly	"But if you have followers who are interested and who are asking questions and disagree sometimes also then you understand that you have followers who are on board [...]"	"What do leaders need from followers?" "Direct communication, true feedback, taking on a greater responsibility than needed, question when needed or question whenever."
		Be honest	-	"[...] they are comfortable in what they are supposed to do. And if they are not they also within the personal leadership they should come and ask me or ask any other people within the organization."
		Speaking up within frame	-	-
		Choose your battles	-	-
	Be involved	Be responsible	"A bad follower is someone who [...] says this and this is not working and constantly pushing the responsibility to the management team."	"A good follower I someone who takes on greater responsibility than just his or her area of responsibility."
		Be solution-oriented	-	-
		Do a good job	"[...] out of this context what is the best that I can achieve?"	-
	Share common purpose	Take part in decision making	"There are a lot of organizations where the decisions just come top down and I am really thankful for working in a small organization where problems are discussed openly and if someone is worried or doesn't understand whatever, we have manager to explain."	"[...] the leader should sometimes make the decision and sometimes not. It depends. When it comes to some let us call them delicate issues like firing or hiring then the leader should take the decision. But when it comes to certain assignments and how to act as a consultant together with the customer that is the consultant's decision."
		Know how to contribute to goal	"Understand the overarching goals and my contribution to that [...]"	-
		Share overall goal	"[...] we need to go there and I agree with the strategy. Because if you disagree with the strategy you should be somewhere else."	"A follower should [...] look at the broader picture but also taking on the broader picture [...]"
	Have expertise	Have expert knowledge	-	"All of us need to be experts in some kind of area. Meaning one leader could not be the expert in all of those areas. Meaning also the leader need to follow the followers."
	Adhere to boundaries	Adhere to your frame	"It means that I need to adhere to the strategic choices, we have very well defined values that I need to buy into but that is just the frames that I am working in and then it is job as a follower to use those guidelines in order to create results."	-
		Make own decisions within frame	-	-
	Be helpful and understanding	Accept that leader has final say	"But a follower should always know that the manager has the final word sometimes. He or she probably knows more about what is going on in the company, hopefully. And you need to understand that."	"But if the leader has said now we have closed this discussion then it is closed. Because that is also in the followership. You should also follow when the leader says end of discussion. Now we are doing it in this direction. Ok."
		Be empathic (make life easier for leader)	"[...] a follower should always know and have it in the back of his or her mind what is it that my manager wants right now."	-
		Be a good colleague	-	"It is to support others within the organization."
		Be a team player	-	-
	Self-focused	Be self-aware	-	-
		Willing to develop	-	-
Passive	Be obedient	Do your job	-	-
		Follow decisions once made	-	"You should also follow when the leader says end of discussion. Now we are doing it in this direction. Ok."
		Be loyal	-	-
	Defer to leader	Adjust behavior to leader	-	-
		Listen to leader	-	-
		Leader makes decision	-	-
		Follow the leader	-	-
No label	Characteristics	Respect authority	"In a democracy I can make my voice heard I can vote and fire the prime minister or president. But I cant really go and fire the owners who are ultimately deciding so I think you need to be aware of that."	-
		Professional	-	-
		Positive attitude	-	-
		High demands on self	-	-
		Humble	-	-
		Followers behaviors resemble leaders behaviors	-	"But in acting it should not be a huge difference between a leader and follower. A follower should act as a leader themselves. That is my firm belief."
		No back stabbing	-	-
		Passionate about job	-	-
		Ambition	"What do leaders need from followers? They need someone who is engaged and ambitious[...]"	-
		Open-minded and creative	-	-

			Consulting Firm (CF)	
Classification	Group	Code	Leader	
			CFL2	CFL3
Proactive	Always voice opinions	Speaking up and questioning	-	-
		Be courageous	-	-
		Influence to get your point through	-	-
		Have integrity	-	-
	Be engaged	Be independent	"[...] but also be confident and independent."	"Well a basic requirement is never to become a passive victim, don't ever behave like a newly hatched chick that is expected to be fed everything."
		Take initiative	"I like energy and proactive behavior and that is the things that I think is most important."	-
Active	Voice opinions within frame	Communicate clearly	"Otherwise if I do not understand I have a responsibility to ask so I understand what to do."	-
		Be honest	"And be open and honest I think that is important too."	-
		Speaking up within frame	"But always in the same time have the integrity to say stop when something is completely wrong and have the ability to give feedback to the leader if needed."	"I am a thinking person and if I have ideas that I feel are productive or an improvement to the end result then I also take responsibility to voicing those at the right time."
		Choose your battles	-	-
	Be involved	Be responsible	"I think I could be a follower even if I am very active and take big responsibility and being independent but being a team player."	"So I expect that person X is given a small opening somewhere that they have some level of success in developing that. So they take quite large responsibility for their own situation and chargeability."
		Be solution-oriented	-	"If you have questions if something is unclear then first try to draw conclusions or have an idea. If there is a piece of the puzzle missing then either you go and ask for it or you create it yourself or you do something."
		Do a good job	"[...] try to chose the best behavior to accomplish as good result as possible."	-
		Take part in decision making	"When it comes to decision making, would you say that the followers take part in that? Or that it is more part of the leader role?" "I think it is both actually."	-
	Share common purpose	Know how to contribute to goal	-	"[...] followership at CF means understanding what is the idea at CF and then realizing how do I check in to this idea and how can I develop and build the vision that we want to build."
		Share overall goal	"Followership for me is to try to understand what we are trying to accomplish together and with that in mind try to choose the best behavior to accomplish as good result as possible."	"In an ideal world, we really try to not be a leader versus a follower organization. We share an idea or multiple ideas."
	Have expertise	Have expert knowledge	-	-
	Adhere to boundaries	Adhere to your frame	-	"It is to respect the game plan that has been laid out (...) I subordinate myself to a given structure."
		Make own decisions within frame	-	-
		Accept that leader has final say	-	-
	Be helpful and understanding	Be empathic (make life easier for leader)	-	"I would like a perfect follower to think of what I need or what we as a collective need and then act according to that. So put yourself in my shoes or put yourself in the collective shoes and try to envision what is the best point of action that I can do."
		Be a good colleague	-	-
		Be a team player	"I think for me a follower is a lot like being a team player."	-
	Self-focused	Be self-aware	-	"I expect my followers to understand who they are and who I am and then act accordingly."
		Willing to develop	-	-
Passive	Be obedient	Do your job	-	-
		Follow decisions once made	-	"A good follower subordinates himself or herself during game time but you are also a high level thinking person with a high commitment to the goal once its time to question the tactics."
		Be loyal	-	-
	Defer to leader	Adjust behavior to leader	"So it is a combination of being kind of flexible and trying to adjust to what we are trying to accomplish (...)".	"If you put that aside and look at we are all humans interacting then of course you can tune this more or less if you try to adapt your behavior also based on personal preferences and personality types. So I expect and I like followers to take that into consideration, knowing who I am. And I must do the same, of course and how we affect each other."
		Listen to leader	-	-
		Leader makes decision	-	-
		Follow the leader	"[...]the leader is responsible for pointing out the direction in some ways and according to that all the team players have to adjust according to that or be flexible or try to follow that."	-
		Respect authority	-	-
No label	Characteristics	Professional	-	-
		Positive attitude	-	-
		High demands on self	-	-
		Humble	-	-
		Followers behaviors resemble leaders behaviors	-	"So it is manager and subordinate and there is a difference there. But leader and follower in the more philosophical sense then I believe that everyone must be a leader and a follower at the same time."
		No back stabbing	-	-
		Passionate about job	-	"I like people that have an idea, who have some passion about what they are doing."
		Ambition	-	"You have to be a self motivator and find your own energy."
		Open-minded and creative	-	-