

A Survey of the
Conceptual and
Empirical Leadership
Literature

Chapter One

Introduction to Leadership

This journey through the leadership literature starts with a set of readings that helps define leadership. On the surface, leadership would appear to have a simple definition. In fact, arriving at a definition is difficult because of the variety of ways that leadership has been envisioned, and because of the complexity brought on by its multiple dimensions. This chapter is intended to start us on our journey in search of an understanding of leaders and the leadership process.

At the outset it is important to recognize that the study of leadership started with the assumption that it was a phenomenon embedded in the leader, as opposed to within the follower and/or the relationship that brings and holds them together. As will be seen in many of our readings, especially in the first reading, where the concept and definition of leadership are explored, emphasis is from the perspective of the leader—his or her role, personality, behavior, influence, and guidance. The leadership literature is largely leader centered.

In the first reading in this chapter, Jon L. Pierce and John W. Newstrom provide a perspective on the meaning of leadership. The ancient Greeks, Egyptians, and Chinese tended to focus on some of the key qualities possessed by the leader. For example, Taoism suggests that leaders need to act such that others come to believe that their success is due to their own efforts and not that of the leaders. As Lao Tzu said: “A leader is best when people barely know he exists, Not so good when people obey and acclaim him, Worse when they despise him. But of a good leader, who talks little, When his task is done, his aim fulfilled, They will all say, We did it ourselves.”¹ The Greeks believed that leaders possessed justice and judgment, wisdom and counsel, shrewdness and cunning, and valor and activism.

Drawing upon the Egyptians, Bernard Bass (1990) suggests that the leadership context consists of the leader and follower.² He goes on to note that there are nearly as many definitions given to leadership as there have been authors who have written about the concept. Based upon an extensive review of the leadership literature, Bass provides us with an overview to the meaning of leadership by organizing the myriad of definitions around 13 different approaches. Pierce and Newstrom provide an overview of Bass’s review. Among some of the interesting concepts that have been linked to the definition of leadership has been its role as “the focus of group processes, as a personality attribute, as the art of inducing compliance, as an exercise of influence, as a particular kind of act, as a form of persuasion, as a power relation, as an instrument in the attainment of goals, as an effect of interaction, as a differentiated role, and as the initiation of structure” (Bass, 1990, 20). To these many roles, many contemporary writers are suggesting

¹ www.brainingquote.com/quotes/authors/l/lao-tzu.html

² Bernard Bass, “Concepts of Leadership,” In *Bass & Stogdill’s Handbook of Leadership* (New York: Free Press, 1990), pp. 13–20.

that leaders also coach, facilitate, and nurture. Finally, Pierce and Newstrom comment upon several alternative perspectives (e.g., self, symbolic, team, and organizational) on the leadership concept.

According to Albert Murphy (1941), the author of the second reading, leadership is not a psychological phenomenon (something embedded in the traits of the individual); instead, leadership is essentially *sociological* in nature.³ Situations in which people find themselves create needs, and it is the nature of these demands that serves to define the type of leadership needed and thus who will lead. Leadership, according to Murphy, is said to be a function of the whole situation and not something that resides in a person. Murphy views leadership as a function of an interaction between the person and the situation, where the situation consists of the follower(s) and the context (e.g., task) confronting them. $L = f$ [(Person) (Follower/s) (Context)].

Also suggesting that leadership is a sociological phenomenon are comments made by University of Washington's leadership scholar Fred Fiedler. In an interview in celebration of the fortieth anniversary of Cornell University's publication of the *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Fiedler said that "the most important lesson we have learned over the past 40 years is probably that the leadership of groups and organizations is a highly complex interaction between an individual and the social and task environment. Leadership is an ongoing transaction between a person in a position of authority and the social environment."⁴

Leadership, when viewed from a sociological perspective, is framed as an interplay and relationship between two or more actors (i.e., leader and followers) within a particular context. This interplay and relationship between the situation, and the needs that it creates for people and the individual are defined as the leadership process, and it is this process that serves to define who the leader is, group effectiveness, future group (social) needs, and once again, who serves as the group's next leader. Thus, the leadership process is fluid and not static in nature.

Edwin P. Hollander and James W. Julian (1969), in the third reading, provide us with insight into several dimensions of leadership.⁵ Among their observations is that leadership is a process, an influence relationship, a leader–follower transaction, a differentiated role, an element of the situation in which the follower finds him/herself, and an exchange relationship.

Today, in the popular world of leadership, the word *vision* is at center stage. The country and many organizations find themselves suffering from a leadership void. As a consequence there is a search for those who have a vision that can unite people in the social system, providing them with a sense of purpose, unity, and a common direction. The third selection in this opening chapter provides a perspective on the leadership phenomenon of *vision*.

Linda Smircich and Gareth Morgan (1982) define the phenomenon of leadership from the perspective of what it is that leaders do for the groups that they are a part of.⁶ *Leaders*, according to Smircich and Morgan, *assign meaning to events for others*. Some individuals emerge as leaders because they "frame experience in a way that provides a viable basis for action" (258). They are individuals who are capable of taking ambiguous situations, interpreting these situations, and framing for the follower an understanding of the situation and what needs to be done to move forward. Smircich and Morgan reinforce Murphy's notion that leadership is a sociological process that is characterized by an interplay between the leader,

³ A. J. Murphy, "A Study of the Leadership Process," *American Sociological Review* 6 (1941), pp. 674–687.

⁴ Fred E. Fiedler, "Research on Leadership Selection and Training: One View of the Future," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 41 (1996), pp. 241–251.

⁵ E. P. Hollander & J. W. Julian, "Contemporary Trends in the Analysis of Leadership Processes," *Psychological Bulletin* 71, 5 (1969), pp. 387–397.

⁶ L. Smircich & G. Morgan, "Leadership: The Management of Meaning," *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science* 18, 3 (1982), pp. 257–273.

the followers, and their common situation (context). Finally, their work implies a power and dependency relationship. Followers surrender their power to interpret and define reality, while simultaneously granting this power to someone else. A later chapter of this book takes a closer look at the role of power and influence as a part of the leadership process.

An implicit message derived from this set of readings is that leadership can sometimes be differentiated from management and headship. Leadership therefore has been cast as a role and relationship arising out of the dynamics that are transpiring between members of a group and the context in which they are embedded. For those interested in pursuing the manager/leader distinction further, we encourage you to read the following: “What Leaders Really Do,” by John P. Kotter, and “The Manager’s Job: Folklore and Fact,” by Henry Mintzberg.⁷ Platitudes regarding the differences between manager and leader, such as “managers manage things and leaders lead people” and “managers do things right and leaders do the right things,” serve very little useful purpose and are often misleading. In fact, there are differences *and* a commonality between leadership and managing. Quite simply, differences between the concepts of leader (leadership) and manager (managing) can be found in their respective definitions, the process or path by which one comes to the position, the source and type of power frequently employed, the base of respective legitimacy, how the position or role is maintained and lost, and the fact that the substance of the connection between leader and follower differs from that between a manager and subordinate or employee. That said, there is often an overlap between the two concepts. To be an outstanding manager often necessitates being a good leader, and to be an outstanding leader requires one to be good at decision making, planning, organizing, directing, and controlling—the essence of managing.

Figure 1.1 provides a visual and conceptual framework around which you can organize your understanding of leadership and the leadership process. The leadership process can be envisioned as a complex and dynamic exchange. There are five key components and their interconnectedness involved in this schematic portrayal (i.e., leader, followers, the context [or situations], the leadership process,

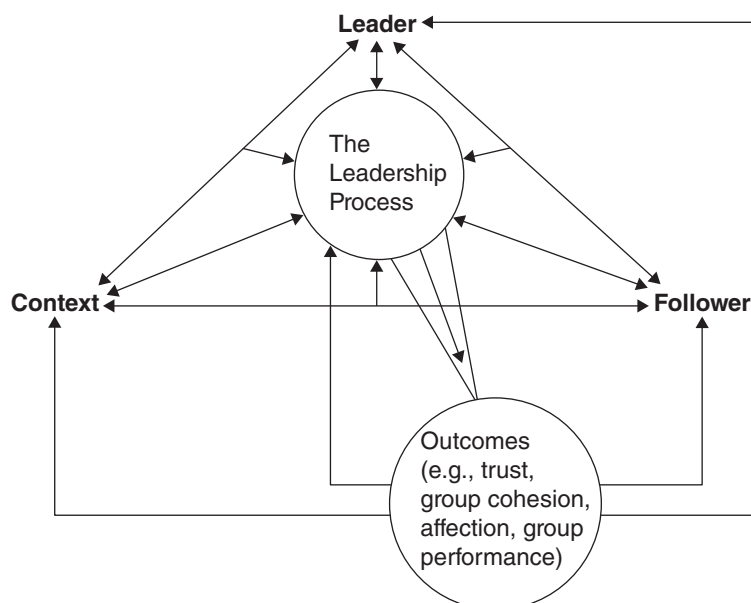


FIGURE 1.1
The Leadership Process

Source: R. B. Dunham & J. L. Pierce, *Management* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman, 1989), p. 556.

⁷ J. P. Kotter, “What Leaders Really Do,” *Harvard Business Review* (May–June 1990), pp. 103–111; H. Mintzberg, “The Manager’s Job: Folklore and Fact,” *Harvard Business Review* (July–August 1975), pp. 49–61.

and the resulting by-products) that can be employed to articulate the meaning of leadership and the leadership process:

- The *leader* is the person who takes charge and guides the performance or activity.
- The *follower(s)* is the individual or group of people who perform under the guidance and instructions of a leader.
- The *context* is the situation—formal or informal, social or work, dynamic or static, emergency or routine, complex or simple, and so on—surrounding a leader–follower relationship.
- The *process* reflects that which is embedded in the act of leadership. Process is multidimensional in nature and consists of leading and following, as well as the assumption and surrender of power to define the situation, the provision of guidance toward goal attainment, exchanges, the building of relationships (e.g., high quality, respect, work), and so on.
- *Outcomes* can include nearly anything arising from interplay between the leader, follower, and situation (context), such as trust, group cohesion, affection, and group performance.

The leadership process is both interactive and dynamic. Leaders influence followers, followers influence leaders, and all parties are influenced by the context in which the exchange takes place. In turn, the outcomes that stem from a leader–follower exchange can influence future interactions because they may produce a change in the context, in the followers, and/or in the leader.

According to this model, understanding of leadership and the leadership process necessitates developing an understanding of the leader, the followers, the context, the processes (e.g., the influence process whereby follower → leader; situation → follower; situation → leader; leader → situation; leader → follower), and the resulting consequences. The figure reveals that leadership (according to Murphy, 1941)⁸ is a sociological phenomenon and that it is dynamic (fluid) in nature. As suggested by Murphy (1941), Hollander and Julian (1969), and Smircich and Morgan (1982),⁹ *leadership is a social influence relationship, interactive between two or more people dependent upon one another for the attainment of certain mutual goals, bound together within a group situation. Leadership is a dynamic and working relationship, built over time, involving an exchange between leader and follower in which leadership is a resource embedded in the situation, providing direction for goal attainment.*

⁸ Murphy, "A Study of the Leadership Process," 674–687.

⁹ Murphy, "A Study of the Leadership Process," 674–687; Hollander & Julian, "Contemporary Trends in the Analysis of Leadership Processes," 387–397; Smircich & Morgan, "Leadership," 257–273.

Reading 1

On the Meaning of Leadership

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Leaders and leadership permeate the context of contemporary society, in much the same way that they have throughout the history of civilization. Mythical characters, such as those in Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, have been used to portray great leaders and great feats of leadership, as well as to carry messages of leader character to succeeding generations. In Homer's *Odyssey*, for example, we learn about the importance of self-confidence in successful leadership.

In addition to the leadership lessons in the Latin, Greek, and Roman classics, Chinese classics from as early as the sixth century B.C. illustrate an interest in leaders and feats of leadership. Confucian writings emphasized the importance of setting a moral example and using rewards and punishment as leadership tools for molding moral behavior. In addition, Taoism emphasized that effective leaders maintain a low profile and work through others:

A leader is best, When people barely know he [she] exists,
Not so good when people obey him [her],
Worse when they despise him [her]. But of a good leader,
who talks little, When his [her] task is done,
his aim fulfilled, They will say: We did it ourselves.

Stories from the Old and New Testaments provide more recent evidence of a long-standing interest in leadership. The book of Exodus, for example, presents an interesting story about the leadership challenges confronting Moses in his attempt to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

Scholars writing during the twentieth century maintained this long-standing interest in leaders and the leadership process. During the twentieth century, there were few, if any, organizational concepts that received as much scholarly attention for as long a period of time as the concept of leadership. Stogdill's review of the leadership literature, published in 1948, examined studies of leadership dating back to 1904. He cited more than 100 authors who provided insight into the nature of leaders and their personality traits. In 1974, he published a second review of 163 studies, which were published

between 1949 and 1970. Today there are journals, such as *Leadership Quarterly*, *Leadership*, *Leadership and Organizational & Studies*, and the *Journal of Leadership Studies*, that focus exclusively on leadership. In addition, each of the major management and organization journals (e.g., *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *Journal of Management*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, and *Administrative Science Quarterly*) routinely publish leadership articles, and virtually every organizational behavior and management textbook devotes a chapter to the topic. Finally, the last three decades have witnessed the publication of dozens of popular leadership books (e.g., Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Bennis's *Why Leaders Can't Lead*, Peter Dean's *Leadership for Everyone*, and Daft and Lengel's *Fusion Leadership*), which are sold in most of the major airports in North America, online (e.g., Amazon.com), and in major bookstores (e.g., Borders and B. Dalton). Many of these books have sold literally thousands upon thousands of copies.

Interest in leaders and the leadership process dates back, for example, to ancient Greece, Rome, and Egyptian writings. While the term *leader*, according to Stogdill (1974), was used as early as 1300 A.D., it was about two hundred years ago that the first use of the term *leadership* appeared (Takala, 1998). [T. Takala. "Plato on Leadership" *Journal of Business Ethics* 17, 785–798.] Scholarly interest in leadership, starting early in the twentieth century, was strongly influenced by the "Great Man" theory of leadership, which posited that great leaders, such as Julius Caesar, Joan of Arc, Catherine the Great, Napoleon, Mao Tsetung, Winston Churchill, and Franklin Delano Roosevelt, were born with a set of personal qualities that destined them to be great leaders. Much of the leadership scholarship, prompted by this theory, conducted during the first half of the twentieth century was focused on the identification of the personal traits (attributes) that characterized those individuals who emerged as leaders and those who came to be highly effective leaders. Following the study of leaders and personal traits, the focus turned to a variety of themes, such as

leader behaviors, the conditions under which certain leader behaviors were effective, the nature of the relationship between leaders and followers, and the forms of influence that were associated with effective leadership. During the first part of the twenty-first century, leadership scholars have demonstrated a strong interest in charismatic and transformational leadership.

In this reading for *Leaders and the Leadership Process*, we will address the question, What does the concept of leadership mean? We recommend that you read an outstanding piece on the “Concepts of Leadership” by Bernard M. Bass (Chapter 1 in *Bass & Stogdill’s Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research, and Management Applications*). Bass provides a detailed review of the diversity of perspectives that have been taken by scholars as they have attempted to wrestle with the leadership phenomenon.

ON THE MEANING OF LEADERSHIP

A review of the leadership literature quickly reveals that there are multiple definitions that have been given to the leadership construct. This diversity of definitions reveals, in part, the complexity of the construct. Some authors have chosen to treat leadership as a psychological phenomenon (i.e., the leader is a person who possesses certain desirable personality and demographic traits), while others see it as a sociological phenomenon (i.e., the leader is the result of a confluence of a person, a group, and the needs arising from a situation faced by each). To use an analogy, those taking this position suggest that to understand a marriage, you cannot focus simply on the wife (husband), but instead, you need to study the wife, the husband, their relationship, and the context within which it is embedded.

Bass (1990), in the introductory chapter to *Bass & Stogdill’s Handbook of Leadership*, focuses on the concept of leadership. He suggests that there are several different approaches to the definition. Specifically, he identifies the following:

- *Leadership as a focus of group processes.* This set of definitions positions the leader as the hub, nucleus, and/or pivotal point for group activity, as might be illustrated with Chapin’s (1924) definition of leadership as “a point of polarization for group cooperation.”
 - *Leadership as personality and its effects.* This set of definitions tends to define leadership in terms of the personality attributes or the strength of character of the leader her-
- himself. Of leadership, Bernard (1926) said: “Any person who is more than ordinarily efficient in carrying psychosocial stimuli to others and is thus effective in conditioning collective responses may be called a leader.”
- *Leadership as an act or behavior.* A tradition in leadership research focused upon the acts of leadership, attempting to answer the question, What do leaders do? This set of definitions can be illustrated by Shartle’s (1956) suggestion that the act of leadership is “one which results in others acting or responding in a shared direction.”
 - *Leadership as an instrument of goal achievement.* This set of definitions ascribes an instrumental value to the act of leadership. A leader, according to Cowley (1928), “is a person who has a program and is moving toward an objective with his group in a definite manner;” while Davis (1942) defines leadership as “the principal dynamic force that motivates and coordinates the organization in the accomplishment of its objectives.”
 - *Leadership as an emerging effect of interaction.* A set of definitions of leadership cast it as an “effect or outgrowth” of group interaction. It is not seen as the “cause” of group action, but something which emerges as a result of interactions within and among members of the group. Bogardus (1929) suggests that it is a social process “which causes a number of people to set out toward an old goal with new zest or a new goal with hopeful courage.”
 - *Leadership as a differentiated role.* Emerging out of role theory and its perspective that members of social systems occupy different roles that are needed to advance the system, leadership is but one of several well-defined, needed, and differentiated roles. Different members of a social system (group) might be seen as making different contributions to the attainment of the group’s goals. These roles, according to Sherif and Sherif (1956) come to be defined in terms of stable expectations that group members develop for themselves and other members of the group. From this perspective, leadership might be seen as that role which integrates the other roles to advance the cause of the social system.
 - *Leadership as the initiation of structure.* A continuation of the role theme to the definition of leadership, those who view leadership as the initiation of structure see a unique role as defining leadership. Stogdill (1959) took this approach, when he defined leadership as “the initiation

and maintenance of structure in expectation and interaction.” This approach is often coupled with leadership as a behavior with initiating structure serving as one of the central behaviors.

Several approaches to the definition of leadership revolve around such concepts as influence, power, and securing compliance. For example:

- *Leadership as the art of inducing compliance.* This set of definitions tends to cast leadership in terms of the molding of the group around the will, intentions, and/or wishes of the leader. Leadership is, therefore, cast from an induction-compliance perspective, and influence is exercised from a single direction—leader to follower—without regard to the follower’s wishes. Allport’s (1924) definition of leadership as “personal social control” and Bundel’s (1930) definition of leadership as “the art of inducing others to do what one wants them to do” are illustrative of the inducing compliance approach to the definition of leadership.
- *Leadership as the exercise of influence.* A set of definitions of leadership appears to employ the concept of influence as separate and distinct from dominance, control, or the forcing of compliance. Such definitions might range from Gandhi’s emphasis upon leading by example (he states: “Clean examples have a curious method of multiplying themselves”), to the statement “follow me” (cf. Bass, 1990), to attempts to move others through speech and the communication process (cf. Tannenbaum, Weschler, & Massarik, 1961), to the movement of others through the production of an effect on followers’ perceptions (cf. Ferris & Rowland, 1981). Some of the definitions simply employ the word *influencing*, such as Tannenbaum et al.’s (1961) suggestion that leadership is “interpersonal influence,” and Tead’s (1935) observation that it is “the activity of influencing people to cooperate toward some goal which they come to find desirable.”
- *Leadership as a form of persuasion.* Some definitions of leadership reflect the movement of others through strongly held convictions and/or reason. A former U.S. president, Dwight Eisenhower, built his definition of leadership around the concept of persuasion. For Eisenhower, “leadership is the ability to decide what is to be done, and to get others to want to do it” (cf. Larson, 1968, p. 21). Lippmann (1922) employed the same conceptualization: “the final test of a leader is that he leaves behind him in other men the conviction and the will to carry on.”
- *Leadership as a power relationship.* This set of definitions focuses on the key role played by power. French and Raven (1959) defined leadership from the perspective of the differences in power relationships among members of a group. Similarly, Janda (1960) saw leadership in terms of a “group member’s perception that another group member has the right to prescribe behavior patterns for the former regarding his activity as a member of a particular group.”

Finally, Bass (1990) observes that there are a number of conceptualizations of leadership that employ a combination of elements. Leadership as a combination of elements was illustrated by Dupuy and Dupuy (1959), who make reference to obedience, confidence, respect, and loyal cooperation in their definition.

Bass (1990) employs the following definition of leadership in *Bass and Stogdill’s Handbook of Leadership*:

Leadership is an interaction between two or more members of a group that often involves a structuring or restructuring of the situation and the perceptions and expectations of the members. (p. 19)

He goes on to suggest that leaders are “agents of change,” “persons whose acts affect other people more than other people’s acts affect them,” and that “leadership occurs when one group member modifies the motivation or competencies of others in the group” (pp. 19–20).

Joseph Rost (1991) in *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century* reviewed 221 definitions of leadership, which emphasizes the point that there are many definitions. After reviewing many of the different definitions of leadership, Ciculla (1995) notes that “one can detect a family resemblance between the different definitions. All of them talk about leadership as some kind of process, act, or influence that in some way gets people to do something” (p. 12). She suggests that if the authors of these 221 definitions were assembled in a room, each would understand one another and they would be able to understand the individual who spoke of *leadership as the process of influencing the movement of a group toward the attainment of a particular outcome*. In fact, Hollander (1964) suggested that leadership is a social influence process. The major differences, Ciculla notes, are to be found in aspects of the relationship that exist between the leader and follower and in terms of how leaders get people to do things.

We believe that leadership is a relationship, a group phenomenon (i.e., sociological in nature) involving two or more people encompassing the

exercise of influence in goal pursuit. While it is difficult to envision leadership without the exercise of influence, attempts to elaborate the construct (i.e., expand upon its description) is where significant differences among leadership scholars is most likely to be observed. Commenting on the variety of perspectives on leadership, Yukl (1998) states, “The differences are not just a case of scholarly nitpicking. They reflect deep disagreement about identification of leaders and leadership processes” (p. 3). We, too, believe that it is highly unlikely that in the near future a single definition and homogeneous elaboration of the construct will emerge. The complexity of the phenomenon, the fact that it manifests itself in so many different ways in so many different contexts, and the different purposes to which it gets put call for a variety of defining features. Nevertheless, it appears to us that most students of leadership can reach agreement around the notion that it is *a sociological phenomenon (a process) involving the intentional exercise of influence exercised by one person over one or more other individuals, in an effort to guide activities toward the attainment of some mutual goal, a goal that requires interdependent action among members of the group*. While we adopt the notion that leadership is a social (interpersonal) influence process (cf. Hollander, 1964) in the pursuit of a common goal, the various other definitions of leadership provide us with valuable insight into important aspects of the leadership phenomenon.

ALTERNATIVE CONCEPTUALIZATIONS

Part of the difficulty and confusion that is associated with attaching meaning to the concept of leadership stems from the fact that there are a variety of non-mutually exclusive categories to which the concept has been employed. First, from a *levels of analysis* perspective, reference to leadership has been made at the community level (e.g., United Nations, nation-state, state/province, city, township), at the industry level (e.g., Boeing leading the aerospace industry into the twenty-first century), and at the organization level (e.g., Steve Jobs’s leadership of Apple), at the small group-work team level, dyadically, and on self-leadership. Leaders (and leadership) are also commonly approached from a *stylistic* perspective, with references made to autocratic, democratic, servant (i.e., providing a service to others; cf. Robert Greenleaf, 1977), people- and task-oriented,

and laissez-faire leadership. From a *thematic*, or issues, perspective, we routinely hear, for example, free world, strategic, ethics, and campaign finance reform leadership. The term *leadership* has also been employed from the perspective of *where the leader comes from*, such that we have designated and emergent leaders, formal and informal leaders, and vertical and horizontal leaders. Finally, we occasionally make reference here to coleadership (i.e., team leadership wherein two or more people simultaneously serve as leader), symbolic leadership (i.e., the institutionalization of symbols as the tools of leadership, such as the leadership provided in absentia by Buddha, Jesus Christ, Muhammad), and strategic leadership. Adding to the confusion is the fact that the terms *management* and *leadership* are often used interchangeably. Going hand in hand with this notion, leadership studies are often conducted in organizations in which managers are treated as leaders and subordinates are treated as followers, and the student of this literature is left wondering how much of the variance in the observed outcomes (e.g., motivation, satisfaction, performance, citizenship behaviors) is a function of the manager-subordinate vis-à-vis the leader-follower relationship. It is often extremely difficult to tease this apart. When is a manager a manager, and when a leader?

While each of these perspectives and uses of the term is a legitimate use of the leadership construct, each reflects a conceptualization different from that which traditionally has been employed. Each of these alternative perspectives on the concept of leadership is different from that which is focused on by this collection of readings. Throughout the remainder of this set of readings, leadership will be seen as a sociological phenomenon, arising out of and operating within a group context. The term *leadership* will generally be cast as a dynamic (fluid), interactive, working relationship between a leader and one or more followers, operating within the framework of a group context for the accomplishment of some collective goal. Efforts to address self, coleadership, strategic, symbolic, organizational, and nation leadership will not be undertaken in this collection of readings.

EMERGING ROLES

Finally, several of the readings in this collection will provide insight into the role and meaning of leadership by answering the question, What do leaders do? Smircich and Morgan (1982), in the last reading in this chapter, for example, suggest

that leaders provide meaning by framing reality for others, and Stogdill (1948) suggests that leaders orchestrate group activity.

Some contemporary writers suggest that there may be a new role for leaders in organizations of the twenty-first century. Manz and Sims (1991), for example, talk about *SuperLeadership*. This type of leader will represent the transformation from the “follow me” leader to the leader who engages in leading others to lead themselves and thus the attainment of self-leadership.

Senge (1990) suggests that accompanying the emergence of the learning organization, a new leadership role emerges. The role of the leader of a learning organization will be that of designer, teacher, and steward. This new leader role brings with it the need for a new set of leadership skills and tools of leadership.

We also note that an increasing number of management gurus are suggesting that many of today’s organizations are “overmanaged and underled.” Increasingly, organizations are modifying the role of yesterday’s manager, changing the role to that of a leader charged with the responsibility to gain follower recognition and acceptance, and to become a facilitator and orchestrator of group activity, while also serving as coach and cheerleader. It is feasible that many of these roles (e.g., servant, teacher, coach, cheerleader) will become a common part of the conceptualization of leader and leadership as the twenty-first century unfolds further.

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Reading 2

A Study of the Leadership Process

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A fault of most leadership studies is emphasis upon the “individual” rather than upon the individual as a factor in a social situation. Such studies seek to determine the qualities of a person which distinguish him as a leader. They imply that these somehow can be abstracted. Difficulties immediately appear. It is discovered that leadership takes protean forms, that it is unstable, that the qualities necessary at one time are unnecessary at other times, that leaders rise and fall as situations change, that the same individual alternates between leading and following. Consequently, leadership becomes a slippery, ill-defined concept. These are commonplaces, but in spite of them, the authors usually fail to sense the root difficulty, viz., the inadequacy of the personality concept as a means of understanding the problem. Leadership is not a psychologically simple concept.

Leadership study calls for a situational approach; this is fundamentally sociological, not psychological. Leadership does not reside in a person. It is a function of the whole situation. The situation calls for certain types of action; the leader does not inject leadership but is the instrumental factor through which the situation is brought to a solution. The emphasis in the title of this paper is not on “leadership qualities” but on the “leadership process.” The word *process* calls attention to the interplay of factors in a total situation. The situation is fundamental and in all cases makes the leader. This is obvious in everyday life and in history. The Hitlers and the Mussolinis are made by situations, and they can be understood only in terms of those situations. Their characteristics are indicative of the times in which they live and the situations of which they are a part. Groups do not act because they have leaders, but they secure leaders to help them to act. In other words, the leader meets a critical need just as a dentist meets a critical need. We go to a dentist because we have a toothache, not the other way around. Skills and abilities of all kinds have a functional relation to the needs of the situation, and these needs are always primary. Leadership comes into being when an individual meets certain social needs, when he

releases in the social situation of which he is a part certain ideas and tendencies which are accepted by the group because they indicate solutions of needs which are dimly sensed. Leadership is best understood when it is looked at impersonally as that quality of a complex situation which, when lifted into a place of prominence, composes its conflicts and creates a new and more desirable situation.

The concept of process is important also in that it calls attention to the fluidity of the leadership situation. Leadership is not a static thing; it is an immutable aspect of personality. Many of the components of leadership, such as self-confidence and the confidence of the group, which are so essential, change with the situation. The self-confidence of a work leader or of a boys’ gang leader usually disappears as soon as these individuals are put into a parlor. Ascendance, also a leadership component, increases when training is given in handling the materials of a situation. While leadership, self-confidence, ascendancy, and other so-called traits and attitudes, apparently carry over from one situation to another, it is only because the situations have practically identical elements. They are not fixed qualities of a person in any sense, nor are they fixed in the relation of two people, but are functions of a three-cornered relation—between the persons concerned and the job. Shyness often becomes dominance when the situation includes elements in which the individual’s skill counts. So-called traits are names of processes; they are fluid; in no strict sense are they “attached” to anybody as “innate” or “acquired” characteristics. While studies of leadership make it appear that leaders usually have certain characteristics which combine under the term leadership ability, this generalization is misleading. Such factors as knowledge, forcefulness, tone of voice, and size are effective components in the solution of many social situations and are, therefore, generally regarded as leadership qualities, especially in unorganized group situations like gangs, but the variety of possible factors is endless. Leadership qualities, so called, vary indefinitely as the needs of groups vary indefinitely.

A few illustrations will make it obvious that the choice of leaders is dictated by group needs. A group lost in the woods would immediately follow the man who, no matter what his personal qualities,

had a knowledge of the woods and the way out. A social group whose needs are conviviality and the pleasant interplay of personalities will be most stimulated by a person who is lively and sociable. The leader of an organization which integrates the functions of other organizations will be a person through whom the leadership drives of others may function; such a person becomes a leader through releasing, channelizing, and integrating the abilities of others. A discussion group leader will be self-effacing, tolerant, critical, and interested in the contributions of others. In the case of the group in the woods, personality, height, weight, and voice count for nothing: The only qualification is a knowledge of the way out. In the case of the social gathering, a personality characterized by pleasing vivacity is of major importance. In the third case, the essential characteristic of the leader is ability to release the activities and ambitions of others in a way which will promote the interest of all the groups concerned; in this case, height, weight, and voice would be irrelevant and forcefulness might even be disastrous. In the case of the discussion group, where leadership is of a highly integrative type, dominance and self-assertiveness, usually thought of as leadership traits, would be fatal. When the great variety of possible groups is considered, leadership appears clearly as a function of the situation. When the situation is simple, as in the case of the group lost in the woods, the demands on leadership are simple, but in complex situations the demands on leadership are multiple.

In order to bring out the meaning of leadership in terms of the situational processes, we may take a case from the study of leaders in work camps. In response to the request that members of work crews describe the characteristics of leaders whom they regarded as successful, the men mentioned things like these: he gets the work done; he explains things to you and doesn't yell at you; he plays no favorites but treats all men alike; he isn't so easy that you can step all over him; he watches out for the safety of the men in his crew.

These are modes of behavior. They are called for by the situation and are, in fact, responses to it. The young men who mentioned these desirable activities were not thinking of traits. So-called traits are derived by grouping these activities which are responses to the situation under classificatory labels or trait names. The first activity, "He gets the work done," is called the trait of efficiency. The second is called reasonableness; the third is called justice; the fourth is called strictness; the fifth, carefulness. Obviously, the leader is reacting to a total situation which embraces these elements as well as others. The qualities mentioned are simply names

for types of activity which meet the needs of a group, which incorporate and make effective the important factors of the situation, emotional and otherwise. The group takes pride in doing a reasonable amount of work; it desires reasonable explanations; it desires fair play in work assignments; it appreciates the need of necessary strictness; it appreciates care for its safety. Does the leader have these traits? The abstractions mentioned and imputed to the leader as qualities are really descriptions of what most of the members of the work gang desire. The names of the appropriate activities are imputed to him as his characteristics. In short, what has happened is this: (1) the group has certain needs, practical and emotional; (2) the leader responds to the situation as a whole with appropriate activities; (3) those responses are classified and labeled with trait names; (4) these names which are abstractions and summational fictions are imputed to the leader as causal psychological entities.

Confusion in the study of leadership results from endowing abstractions with reality and imputing character qualities to the person who brings the element of control into the situation. We have failed to see the leadership process as an interplay of forces, as an integrative activity. Of course, when types of a leader's integrative activities become habitual, we may call them traits provided we understand that they are activities, and we may try to develop them because these habits of conduct are useful in a large number of situations.

In summary, leadership is the process of securing direction in social activity which otherwise would be blind and disorderly. Leadership activities are resultants of the interplay of the factors which emerge out of a situation and reenter it as controls. Emphasis on so-called traits of personality, which have been shown to be hypostatized summational fictions, therefore, gives way to a study of the integrative factors in the situation. The personality does not stand alone but is a changing element in a total situation. The situation is a concept embracing many elements: the leader with his abilities and drives, the group (including potential leaders), material resources, viewpoints, desires, and needs, and a condition of readiness for leadership. This situational whole is a continuous series of influences and changes. Relativity characterizes every factor. Leading alternates with following. Solutions are new stages in the situation preparing the way for other solutions which in turn call for new types of leadership to secure new ends. Leadership may be defined as *that element in a group situation which, when made conscious and controlling, brings about a new situation that is more satisfying to the group as a whole. . . .*

Reading 3

Contemporary Trends in the Analysis of Leadership Processes

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The history of leadership research is a fitful one. Certainly as much as, and perhaps more than, other social phenomena, conceptions and inquiry about leadership have shifted about. The psychological study of leadership in this century began with a primary focus on the personality characteristics which made a person a leader. But the yield from this approach was fairly meager and often confused, as Stogdill (1948) and Mann (1959), among others, documented in their surveys of this literature. In the 1930s, Kurt Lewin and his coworkers (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939) turned attention to the “social climates” created by several styles of leadership, that is, authoritarian, democratic, or laissez-faire. Together with developments in the sociometric study of leader–follower relations (e.g., Jennings, 1943), this work marked a significant break with the past.

Two residues left by Lewin’s approach fed importantly into later efforts, even with the limited nature of the original study. One was the concern with “leader style,” which still persists, especially in the work on administrative or managerial leadership (see, e.g., McGregor, 1960, 1966; Preston & Heintz, 1949). The other was the movement toward a view of the differential contexts of leadership, ultimately evolving into the situational approach which took firm hold of the field by the 1950s (cf. Gouldner, 1950).

For the most part, the situational movement was spurred by the growing recognition that there were specialized demands made upon leadership, depending upon the nature of the group task and other aspects of the situation. Clearly, a deficiency in the older approach was its acceptance of “leader” as a relatively homogeneous role, independent of the variations in leader–follower relationships across situations. The disordered state in which the trait approach left the study of leadership was amply revealed by Stogdill in his 1948 survey, which marked a point of departure for the developing situational emphasis. The publication in 1949 of Hemphill’s *Situational Factors in Leadership* contributed a further push in this direction.

The main focus of the situational approach was the study of leaders in different settings, defined especially in terms of different group tasks and group structure. Mainly, though not entirely, through laboratory experimentation, such matters as the continuity in leadership across situations with variable tasks was studied (e.g., Carter, Haythorn, Meierowitz, & Lanzetta, 1951; Carter & Nixon, 1949; Gibb, 1947). The findings of this research substantially supported the contention that who became a leader depended in some degree upon the nature of the task. With this movement, however, there came a corresponding de-emphasis on the personality characteristics of leaders or other group members. . . .

Within the present era, characterized by a greater sensitivity to the social processes of interaction and exchange, it becomes clearer that the two research emphases represented by the trait and situational approaches afforded a far too glib view of reality. Indeed, in a true sense, neither approach ever represented its own philosophical underpinning very well, and each resulted in a caricature. The purpose here is to attempt a rectification of the distortion that these traditions represented, and to point out the increasing signs of movement toward a fuller analysis of leadership as a social influence process, and not as a fixed state of being.

AN OVERVIEW

By way of beginning, it seems useful to make a number of observations to serve as an overview. First, several general points which grow out of current research and thought on leadership are established. Thereafter, some of the directions in which these developments appear to be heading are indicated, as well as those areas which require further attention.

One overriding impression conveyed by surveying the literature of the 1960s, in contrast to the preceding two decades, is the redirection of interest in leadership toward processes such as power and authority relationships (e.g., Blau, 1964; Emerson, 1962; Janda, 1960; Raven, 1965). The tendency now is to attach far greater significance

to the interrelationship between the leader, the followers, and the situation (see, e.g., Fiedler, 1964, 1965, 1967; Hollander, 1964; Hollander & Julian, 1968; Steiner, 1964). In consequence, the problem of studying leadership and understanding these relationships is recognized as a more formidable one than was earlier supposed (cf. Cartwright & Zander, 1968). Several of the particulars which signalize this changing emphasis may be summarized under four points, as follows:

1. An early element of confusion in the study of *leadership* was the failure to distinguish it as a process from the *leader* as a person who occupies a central role in that process. Leadership constitutes an influence relationship between two, or usually more, persons who depend upon one another for the attainment of certain mutual goals within a group situation. This situation not only involves the task but also comprises the group's size, structure, resources, and history, among other variables.
2. This relationship between leader and led is built *over time*, and involves an exchange or *transaction* between leaders and followers in which the leader both gives something and gets something. The leader provides a *resource* in terms of adequate role behavior directed toward the group's goal attainment, and in return receives greater influence associated with status, recognition, and esteem. These contribute to his "legitimacy" in making influence assertions, and in having them accepted.
3. There are differential tasks or functions attached to being a leader. While the image of the leader frequently follows Hemphill's (1961) view of one who "initiates structure," the leader is expected to function too as a mediator within the group, as a group spokesman outside it, and very often also as the decision maker who sets goals and priorities. Personality characteristics which may fit a person to be a leader are determined by the perceptions held by followers, in the sense of the particular role expectancies and satisfactions, rather than by the traits measured via personality scale scores.
4. Despite the persisting view that leadership traits do not generalize across situations, leader effectiveness can and should be studied as it bears on the group's achievement of desired outputs (see Katz & Kahn, 1966). An approach to the study of leader effectiveness as a feature of the group's success, in system terms, offers a clear alternative to the older concern with what the leader did do or did not do.

A richer, more interactive conception of leadership processes would entertain these considerations as points of departure for further study. Some evidence for a trend toward this development is considered in what follows.

WHITHER THE "SITUATIONAL APPROACH"?

What was the essential thrust of the situational approach, after all? Mainly, it was to recognize that the qualities of the leader were variously elicited, valued, and reacted to as a function of differential group settings and their demands. Hemphill (1949a) capped the point in saying "there are no absolute leaders, since successful leadership must always take into account the specific requirements imposed by the nature of the group which is to be led, requirements as diverse in nature and degree as are the organizations in which persons band together" [p. 225].

Though leadership events were seen as outcomes of a relationship that implicates the leader, the led, and their shared situation, studies conducted within the situational approach usually left the *process* of leadership unattended. . . .

But even more importantly, the situational view made it appear that the leader and the situation were quite separate. Though they may be separable for analytic purposes, they also impinge on one another in the perceptions of followers. Thus, the leader, from the follower's vantage point, is an element in the situation, and one who shapes it as well. As an active agent of influence he communicates to other group members by his words and his actions, implying demands which are reacted to in turn. In exercising influence, therefore, the leader may set the stage and create expectations regarding what he should do and what he will do. Rather than standing apart from the leader, the situation perceived to exist may be his creation.

It is now possible to see that the trait and situational approaches merely emphasize parts of a process which are by no means separable. One kind of melding of the trait and situational approaches, for example, is found in the work of Fiedler. His essential point, sustained by an extensive program of research (see 1958, 1964, 1965, 1967), is that the leader's effectiveness in the group depends upon the structural properties of the group and the situation, including interpersonal perceptions of both leader and led. He finds, for example, that the willingness of group members to be influenced by the leader is conditioned by leader characteristics, but that the quality and

direction of this influence is contingent on the group relations and task structure (1967). This work will be discussed further in due course. . . .

A leader, therefore, sets the basis for relationships within the group, and thereby can affect outcomes. As Hemphill (1961) suggested, the leader initiates structure. But more than just structure in a concrete sense, he affects the process which occurs within that structure. Along with other neglected aspects of process in the study of leadership is the goal-setting activity of the leader. Its importance appears considerable, though few studies give it attention. In one of these, involving discussion groups, Burke (1966) found that the leader's failure to provide goal orientations within the group led to antagonism, tension, and absenteeism. This effect was most acute when there was clear agreement within the group regarding who was to act as the leader. Though such expectations about the leader undoubtedly are pervasive in groups studied in research on leadership, they are noted only infrequently.

LEGITIMACY AND SOCIAL EXCHANGE IN LEADERSHIP

Among the more substantial features of the leader's role is his perceived legitimacy—how he attains it and sustains it. One way to understand the process by which the leader's role is legitimated is to view it as an exchange of rewards operating to signalize the acceptance of his position and influence.

In social exchange terms, the person in the role of leader who fulfills expectations and achieves group goals provides rewards for others which are reciprocated in the form of status, esteem, and heightened influence. Because leadership embodies a two-way influence relationship, recipients of influence assertions may respond by asserting influence in return, that is, by making demands on the leader. The very sustenance of the relationship depends upon some yielding to influence on both sides. As Homans (1961) put it, "Influence over others is purchased at the price of allowing one's self to be influenced by others" [p. 286]. To be influential, authority depends upon esteem, he said. By granting esteem itself, or symbolic manifestations of it, one may in turn activate leadership, in terms of a person taking on the leader role. . . .

The "idiosyncrasy credit" concept (Hollander, 1958) suggests that a person's potential to be influential arises out of the positive dispositions others hold toward him. In simplest terms, competence in helping the group achieve its goals, and early conformity to its normative expectations for members

provide the potential for acting as a leader and being perceived as such. Then, assertions of influence which were not tolerated before are more likely to be acceptable. This concept applies in an especially important way to leadership succession, since it affords the basis for understanding how a new leader becomes legitimized in the perceptions of his peers. Further work on succession phenomena appears, in general, to be another area of fruitful study. There are many intriguing issues here, such as the question of the relative importance in legitimacy of factors such as "knowledge" and "office," in Max Weber's terms, which deserve further consideration (see, e.g., Evan & Zelditch, 1961). . . .

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE LEADER

By now it is clear that an entire interpersonal system is implicated in answering the question of the leader's effectiveness. The leader is not effective merely by being influential, without regard to the processes at work and the ends achieved. Stressing this point, Selznick (1957) said that, "far more than the capacity to mobilize personal support . . . (or) the maintenance of equilibrium through the routine solution of everyday problems," the leader's function is "to define the ends of group existence, to design an enterprise distinctively adapted to these ends, and to see that the design becomes a living reality" [p. 37].

As Katz and Kahn (1966) observed, any group operates with a set of resources to produce certain outputs. Within this system, an interchange of inputs for outputs occurs, and this is facilitated by leadership functions which, among other things, direct the enterprise. The leader's contribution and its consequences vary with system demands, in terms of what Selznick referred to as "distinctive competence." Taken by itself, therefore, the typical conception of leadership as one person directing others can be misleading, as already indicated. Though the leader provides a valued resource, the group's resources are not the leader's alone. Together, such resources provide the basis for functions fulfilled in the successful attainment of group goals, or, in other terms, group outputs.

Given the fact that a group must work within the set of available resources, its effectiveness is gauged in several ways. Stogdill (1959), for one, distinguished these in terms of the group's performance, integration, and member satisfaction as group outputs of a leadership process involving the use of the group's resources. Thus, the leader and his characteristics constitute a set of

resources contributing to the effective utilization of other resources. A person who occupies the central role of leader has the task of contributing to this enterprise, within the circumstances broadly confronting the group. . . .

IDENTIFICATION WITH THE LEADER

For any leader, the factors of favorability and effectiveness depend upon the perceptions of followers. Their identification with him implicates significant psychological ties which may affect materially his ability to be influential. Yet the study of identification is passé in leadership research. Though there is a recurring theme in the literature of social science, harking back to Weber (see 1947), about the so-called charismatic leader, this quality has a history of imprecise usage; furthermore, its tie with identification processes is by no means clear. Putting the study of the sources and consequences of identification with the leader on a stronger footing seems overdue and entirely feasible.

Several lines of work in social psychology appear to converge on identification processes. The distinction made by Kelman (1961) regarding identification, internalization, and compliance, for example, has obvious relevance to the relationship between the leader and his followers. This typology might be applied to the further investigation of leadership processes. The work of Sears (1960) and of Bandura and Walters (1963), concerning the identification of children with adult models, also has implications for such study.

One point which is clear, though the dynamics require far more attention, is that the followers' identification with their leader can provide them with social reality, in the sense of a shared outlook. . . .

SOME CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The present selective review and discussion touches upon a range of potential issues for the further study of leadership. The discussion is by no means exhaustive in providing details beyond noting suggestive developments. It is evident, however, that a new set of conceptions about leadership is beginning to emerge after a period of relative quiescence. . . .

Then, too, there is a need to consider the two-way nature of the influence process, with greater attention paid to the expectations of followers within the system. As reiterated here, the key to

an understanding of leadership rests in seeing it as an influence process, involving an implicit exchange relationship over time.

No less important as a general point is the need for a greater recognition of the system represented by the group and its enterprise. This recognition provides a vehicle by which to surmount the misleading dichotomy of the leader and the situation which so long has prevailed. By adopting a systems approach, the leader, the led, and the situation defined broadly are seen as interdependent inputs variously engaged toward the production of desired outputs.

Some release is needed from the highly static, positional view of leadership if we are to analyze its processes. A focus on leadership maintenance has weighted the balance against a more thorough probe of emerging leadership and succession phenomena. Investigators should be more aware of their choice and the differential implications, as between emerging and ongoing leadership. In this regard, the significance of the legitimacy of leadership, its sources, and effects requires greater attention in future investigations.

In studying the effectiveness of the leader, more emphasis should be placed on the outcomes for the total system, including the fulfillment of expectations held by followers. The long-standing overconcern with outcome, often stated only in terms of the leader's ability to influence, should yield to a richer conception of relationships geared to mutual goals. Not irrelevantly, the perception of the leader held by followers, including their identification with him, needs closer scrutiny. In this way, one may approach a recognition of stylistic elements allowing given persons to be effective leaders.

Finally, it seems plain that research on task oriented groups must attend more to the organizational frameworks within which these groups are imbedded. Whether these frameworks are industrial, educational, governmental, or whatever, they are implicated in such crucial matters as goal-setting, legitimacy of authority, and leader succession. Though not always explicit, it is the organizational context which recruits and engages members in particular kinds of tasks, role relationships, and the rewards of participation. This context deserves more explicitness in attempts at understanding leadership processes.

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Reading 4

Leadership: The Management of Meaning

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The concept of leadership permeates and structures the theory and practice of organizations and hence the way we shape and understand the nature of organized action, and its possibilities. In fact, the concept and practice of leadership, and variant forms of direction and control, are so powerfully ingrained into popular thought that the absence of leadership is often seen as an absence of organization. Many organizations are paralyzed by situations in which people appeal for direction, feeling immobilized and disorganized by the sense that they are not being led. Yet other organizations are plagued by the opposite situation characterized in organizational vernacular as one of “all chiefs, no Indians”—the situation where the majority aspire to lead and few to follow. Thus, successful acts of organization are often seen to rest in the synchrony between the initiation of action and the appeal for direction; between the actions of leaders and the receptivity and responsiveness of followers. . . .

THE PHENOMENON OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership is realized in the process whereby one or more individuals succeeds in attempting to frame and define the reality of others. Indeed, leadership situations may be conceived as those in which there exists an *obligation* or a perceived *right* on the part of certain individuals to define the reality of others.

This process is most evident in unstructured group situations where leadership emerges in a natural and spontaneous manner. After periods of interaction, unstructured leaderless groups typically evolve common modes of interpretation and shared understandings of experience that allow them to develop into a social organization (Bennis & Shepard, 1965). Individuals in groups that

evolve this way attribute leadership to those members who structure experience in meaningful ways. Certain individuals, as a result of personal inclination or the emergent expectations of others, find themselves adopting or being obliged to take a leadership role by virtue of the part they play in the definition of the situation. They emerge as leaders because of their role in framing experience in a way that provides a viable basis for action, e.g., by mobilizing meaning, articulating and defining what has previously remained implicit or unsaid, by inventing images and meanings that provide a focus for new attention, and by consolidating, confronting, or changing prevailing wisdom (Peters, 1978; Pondy, 1976). Through these diverse means, individual actions can frame and change situations, and in so doing enact a system of shared meaning that provides a basis for organized action. The leader exists as a formal leader only when he or she achieves a situation in which an obligation, expectation, or right to frame experience is presumed, or offered and accepted by others.

Leadership, like other social phenomena, is socially constructed through interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1966), emerging as a result of the constructions and actions of both leaders and led. It involves a complicity or process of negotiation through which certain individuals, implicitly or explicitly, surrender their power to define the nature of their experience to others. Indeed, leadership depends on the existence of individuals willing, as a result of inclination or pressure, to surrender, at least in part, the powers to shape and define their own reality. If a group situation embodies competing definitions of reality, strongly held, no clear pattern of leadership evolves. Often, such situations are characterized by struggles among those who aspire to define the situation. Such groups remain loosely coupled networks of interaction, with members often feeling that they are “disorganized” because they do not share a common way of making sense of their experience.

Leadership lies in large part in generating a point of reference, against which a feeling of

organization and direction can emerge. While in certain circumstances the leader's image of reality may be hegemonic, as in the case of charismatic or totalitarian leaders who mesmerize their followers, this is by no means always the case. For the phenomenon of leadership in being interactive is by nature dialectical. It is shaped through the interaction of at least two points of reference, i.e., of leaders and of led.

This dialectic is often the source of powerful internal tensions within leadership situations. These manifest themselves in the conflicting definitions of those who aspire to define reality and in the fact that while the leader of a group may forge a unified pattern of meaning, that very same pattern often provides a point of reference for the negation of leadership (Sennett, 1980). While individuals may look to a leader to frame and concretize their reality, they may also react against, reject, or change the reality thus defined. While leadership often emerges as a result of expectations projected on the emergent leader by the led, the surrender of power involved provides the basis for negation of the situation thus created. Much of the tension in leadership situations stems from this source. Although leaders draw their power from their ability to define the reality of others, their inability to control completely provides seeds of disorganization in the organization of meaning they provide.

The emergence of leadership in unstructured situations thus points toward at least four important aspects of leadership as a phenomenon. First, leadership is essentially a social process defined through interaction. Second, leadership involves a process of defining reality in ways that are sensible to the led. Third, leadership involves a dependency relationship in which individuals surrender their powers to interpret and define reality to others.¹ Fourth, the emergence of formal leadership roles represents an additional stage of institutionalization, in which rights and obligations to define the nature of experience and activity are recognized and formalized.

LEADERSHIP IN FORMALIZED SETTINGS

The main distinguishing feature of formal organization is that the way in which experience is to be structured and defined is built into a stock of taken-for-granted meanings, or "typifications" in use (Schutz, 1967) that underlie the everyday definition and reality of the organization. In particular, a formal organization is premised upon shared

meanings that define roles and authority relationships that institutionalize a pattern of leadership. In essence, formal organization truncates the leadership process observed in natural settings, concretizing its characteristics as a mode of social organization into sets of predetermined roles, relationships, and practices, providing a blueprint of how the experience of organizational members is to be structured.

Roles, for example, institutionalize the interactions and definitions that shape the reality of organizational life. Rules, conventions, and work practices present ready-made typifications through which experience is to be made sensible. Authority relationships legitimize the pattern of dependency relations that characterize the process of leadership, specifying who is to define organizational reality, and in what circumstances. Authority relationships institutionalize a hierarchical pattern of interaction in which certain individuals are expected to define the experience of others—to lead, and others to have their experience defined—to follow. So powerful is this process of institutionalized leadership and the expectation that someone has the right and obligation to define reality, that leaders are held to account if they do not lead "effectively." . . .

LEADERSHIP AS THE MANAGEMENT OF MEANING

A focus on the way meaning in organized settings is created, sustained, and changed provides a powerful means of understanding the fundamental nature of leadership as a social process. In understanding the way leadership actions attempt to shape and interpret situations to guide organizational members into a common interpretation of reality, we are able to understand how leadership works to create an important foundation for organized activity. This process can be most easily conceptualized in terms of a relationship between figure and ground. Leadership action involves a moving figure—a flow of actions and utterances (i.e., what leaders do) within the context of a moving ground—the actions, utterances, and general flow of experience that constitute the situation being managed. Leadership as a phenomenon is identifiable within its wider context as a form of action that seeks to shape its context.

Leadership works by influencing the relationship between figure and ground, and hence the meaning and definition of the context as a whole. The actions and utterances of leaders guide the

attention of those involved in a situation in ways that are consciously or unconsciously designed to shape the meaning of the situation. The actions and utterances draw attention to particular aspects of the overall flow of experience, transforming what may be complex and ambiguous into something more discrete and vested with a specific pattern of meaning. This is what Schutz (1967) has referred to as a “bracketing” of experience, and Goffman (1974) as a “framing” of experience, and Bateson (1972) and Weick (1979) as the “punctuation of contexts.” The actions and utterances of leaders frame and shape the context of action in such a way that the members of that context are able to use the meaning thus created as a point of reference for their own action and understanding of the situation.

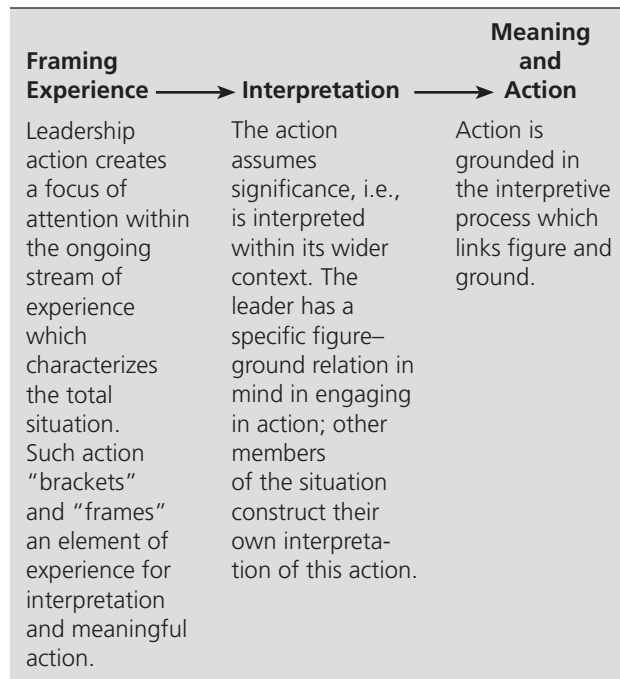
This process can be represented schematically in terms of the model presented in Figure 1. When leaders act, they punctuate contexts in ways that provide a focus for the creation of meaning. Their action isolates an element of experience, which can be interpreted in terms of the context in which it is set. Indeed, its meaning is embedded in its relationship with its context. Consider, for example, the simple situation in which someone in a leadership role loses his or her temper over the failure of an employee to complete a job on time. For the leader this action embodies a meaning that links the event to context in a significant way—e.g.,

“This employee has been asking for a reprimand for a long time”; “This was an important job”; “This office is falling apart.” For the employees in the office, the event may be interpreted in similar terms, or a range of different constructions placed upon the situation—e.g., “Don’t worry about it; he always loses his temper from time to time”; “She’s been under pressure lately because of problems at home.”

The leader’s action may generate a variety of interpretations that set the basis for meaningful action. It may serve to redefine the context into a situation where the meeting of deadlines assumes greater significance, or merely serves as a brief interruption in daily routine, soon forgotten. As discussed earlier, organized situations are often characterized by complex patterns of meaning, based on rival interpretations of the situation. Different members may make sense of situations with the aid of different interpretive schemes, establishing “counterrealities,” a source of tension in the group situation that may set the basis for change of an innovative or disintegrative kind. These counterrealities underwrite much of the political activities within organizations, typified by the leader’s loyal lieutenants—the “yes men” accepting and reinforcing the leader’s definition of the situation and the “rebels” or “out” groups forging and sustaining alternative views.

Effective leadership depends upon the extent to which the leader’s definition of the situation (e.g., “People in this office are not working hard enough”) serves as a basis for action by others. It is in this sense that effective leadership rests heavily on the framing of the experience of others, so that action can be guided by common conceptions as to what should occur. The key challenge for a leader is to manage meaning in such a way that individuals orient themselves to the achievement of desirable ends. In this endeavor the use of language, ritual, drama, stories, myths, and symbolic construction of all kinds may play an important role (Pfeffer, 1981; Pondy, Frost, Morgan & Dandridge, 1982; Smircich, 1982). They constitute important tools in the management of meaning. Through words and images, symbolic actions and gestures, leaders can structure attention and evoke patterns of meaning that give them considerable control over the situation being managed. These tools can be used to forge particular kinds of figure–ground relations that serve to create appropriate modes of organized action. Leadership rests as much in these symbolic modes of action as in those instrumental modes of management, direction, and control that define the substance of the leader’s formal organizational role. . . .

FIGURE 1 Leadership: A Figure–Ground Relationship Which Creates Figure–Ground Relationships



IMPLICATIONS FOR THE THEORY AND PRACTICE OF CONTEMPORARY ORGANIZATION

. . . Leaders symbolize the organized situation in which they lead. Their actions and utterances project and shape imagery in the minds of the led, which is influential one way or another in shaping actions within the setting as a whole. This is not to deny the importance of the voluntary nature of the enactments and sense-making activities initiated by members of the situation being managed. Rather, it is to recognize and emphasize the special and important position accorded to the leader's view of the situation in the frame of reference of others. Leaders, by nature of their leadership role, are provided with a distinctive opportunity to influence the sense making of others. Our case study illustrates the importance of the leader recognizing the nature of his or her influence and managing the meaning of situations in a constructive way. At a minimum this involves that he or she (a) attempt to deal with the equivocality that permeates many interactive situations; (b) attend to the interpretive schemes of those involved; and (c) embody, through use of appropriate language, rituals, and other forms of symbolic discourse, the meanings and values conducive to desired modes of organized action. A focus on leadership as the management of meaning encourages us to develop a theory for the practice of leadership in which these three generalizations are accorded a central role.

Our analysis also draws attention to the role of power as a defining feature of the leadership process. We see the way the power relations embedded in a leadership role oblige others to take particular note of the sense-making activities emanating from that role. We have characterized this in terms of a dependency relation between leaders and led, in which the leader's sense-making activities assume priority over the sense-making activities of others.

The existence of leadership depends on and fosters this dependency, for insofar as the leader is expected to define the situation, others are expected to surrender that right. As we have noted, leadership as a phenomenon depends upon the existence of people who are prepared to surrender their ability to define their reality to others. Situations of formal leadership institutionalize this pattern into a system of rights and obligations whereby the leader has the prerogative to define reality, and the led to accept that definition as a frame of reference for orienting their own activity.

Organized action in formal settings constitutes a process of enactment and sense making on the part

of those involved, but one shaped in important ways by the power relations embedded in the situation as a whole. Leadership and the organizational forms to which it gives rise enact a reality that expresses a power relationship. An understanding of the power relationship embedded in all enactment processes is thus fundamental for understanding the nature of organization as an enacted social form, for enactments express power relationships.

Thus our analysis of the leadership process tells us much about the nature of organization as a hierarchical phenomenon. Most patterns of formal organization institutionalize the emergent characteristics of leadership into roles, rules, and relations that give tangible and enduring form to relationships between leaders and led. Our analysis of leadership as a social phenomenon based on interaction, sense making, and dependency implies a view of much modern organization in which these factors are seen as defining features. To see leadership as the management of meaning is to see organizations as networks of managed meanings, resulting from those interactive processes through which people have sought to make sense of situations.

This view of leadership and organization provides a framework for reconsidering the way leadership has been treated in organizational research. By viewing leadership as a relationship between traits, roles, and behaviors and the situations in which they are found, or as a transactional process involving the exchange of rewards and influence, most leadership research has focused upon the dynamics and surface features of leadership as a tangible social process. The way leadership as a phenomenon involves the structuring and transformation of reality has with notable exceptions (e.g., Burns, 1978), been ignored, or at best approached tangentially. The focus on the exchange of influence and rewards has rarely penetrated to reveal the way these processes are embedded in, and reflect a deeper structure of, power-based meaning and action. Leadership is not simply a process of acting or behaving, or a process of manipulating rewards. It is a process of power-based reality construction and needs to be understood in these terms.

The concept of leadership is a central building block of the conventional wisdom of organization and management. For the most part the idea that good organization embodies effective leadership practice passes unquestioned. Our analysis here leads us to question this wisdom and points toward the unintended consequences that leadership situations often generate.

The most important of these stem from the dependency relations that arise when individuals

surrender their power and control over the definition of reality to others. Leaders may create situations in which individuals are crippled by purposelessness and inaction when left to guide efforts on their own account. Leadership may actually work against the development of self-responsibility, self-initiative, and self-control, in a manner that parallels Argyris's (1957) analysis of the way the characteristics of bureaucratic organization block potentialities for full human development. These blocks arise whenever leadership actions divert individuals from the process of defining and taking responsibility for their own action and experience.

Leadership situations may generate a condition of "trained inaction" in the led, a variant form of Veblen's (1904) "trained incapacity," observed by Merton (1968) as a dominant characteristic of the bureaucratic personality. . . .

The conventional wisdom that organization and leadership are by definition intertwined has structured the way we see and judge alternative modes of organized action. Approaching this subject from a perspective that treats organization as a phenomenon based on the management of meaning, we can begin to see and understand the importance of developing and encouraging alternative means through which organized action can be generated and sustained.

Note

1. A minor qualification is appropriate here in that certain charismatic leaders may inspire others to restructure their reality in creative ways. The dependency relation is evident, however, in that the individual takes the charismatic leader as a point of reference in this process.

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