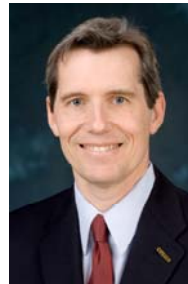


The Foundations of Public Administration Series is a collection of articles written by experts in 20 content areas, providing introductory essays and recommending top articles in those subjects.

An Introduction to Leadership and Some of the Challenges in the Study and Teaching of It

Montgomery Van Wart

Interest in leaders and leadership dates back thousands of years to the beginning of history, but the modern study of leadership is only about 100 years old. Ultimately there are three major reasons for the enduring human interest in the topic of leadership. First, the effect of leaders on our lives is omnipresent. Leaders affect us on a grand scale in that they determine the success or failure of our societies, countries, and localities. At a midlevel, leaders of public agencies can bring in resources, set a positive tone, encourage a “can-do attitude,” or alternatively, run the department like a fiefdom, stamp out creativity, make poor judgment calls, and/or be slow to react to external events. At a more tangible level for the many working in the “bowels of the organization,” a bad supervisor sends us scurrying for a new job while a good team leader makes a difficult assignment seem easy because of good organization and encouragement. Second, we all have leadership roles ourselves in which we want to do well, no matter whether it is being the chief operating officer of a major institution, or the lead person in a cross-functional team in which we have the most expertise. Third, we are compulsively fascinated by people in leadership positions. No matter whether the leader is a spiritual saint or a demonic despot, a great success or a flawed ruler, we are equally mesmerized.



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Yet for all its ancient roots, its affect on all of us as citizens and employees, our personal stake in doing it well, and our compulsive fascination, the study and teaching of leadership is challenging.

We will first examine some of the peculiar ironies surrounding public service leadership, that have tended to hold it back as a discipline and field of study until relatively recently. Next, we will survey some of the challenges in teaching leadership to any audience. Then we will turn to a brief overview of fundamentally different types because they are so often confused and conflated. Narrowing our focus to organizational leadership, we will examine the variations, history, and debates important in administrative leadership studies.

Some Ironies in Public Service Leadership

The public and many academics have deep historical/political reservations about leadership by public servants in American society—elected or appointed. In addition, traditional democratic theory was loath to acknowledge anything other than a purely technical role for the administrative apparatus of government. Nonetheless, strong leadership in both the political and administrative spheres has emerged, and thus both theory and teaching have had to play “catch-up” with reality.

The founding and structuring of the country was overwhelmingly a reaction to the excesses of concentrated, authoritarian executive power. The Pilgrims and Puritans fled religious intolerance, Penn established a colony based on “brotherly love” rather than royal dictate, and the Virginians set up a colony

based on greater financial independence, a mindset it retained even after it was converted to a crown colony. The American Revolution was a reaction by many colonists (but not all) that the “mother” country was being to autocratic. In setting up its government, the new country was so determined to keep political power localized that it almost foundered under the Articles of Confederation. Even the Constitution set up a system that equally divided state and federal power, and in turn divided the more centralized of the two into a unique triumvirate of executive, legislative, and judicial branches. A telling example of this mindset that survives to this day are the numerous elected “row officers” in most counties that defy most modern conceptions of the political corporatism necessary for successful contemporary jurisdictions. More telling, however, is the ascent of the executive branch as first among equals over time with Lincoln’s single-minded determination to keep the union together, Roosevelt’s expansion of government to “fix” the Great Depression, and the growth of presidential prerogatives in the Cold War and its successor. Although the reality of an imperial presidency and the widespread preemption of the federal government have long been acknowledged and studied, strong historical forces continually seek to ensure that presidential and federal power is not excessive, as impeachments and states’ rights Supreme Court rulings often show. Thus, while the “strong” leadership provided a powerful president and a dominant federal government is widely backed in a general sense, it is also simultaneously and paradoxically the source of constant concern and

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suspicion among the bulk of the same public that supports it.

The American ambivalence about strong political leadership is even more pronounced at the administrative level. Of course the ancient principle of separating taxing and spending authority in the legislative branch, while providing executive authority in another, aids enormously in mitigating excessive concentration of power. The more sophisticated version of this is to make sure that the laws stipulate implementation as well as policy. In the ideal, this has often led to the notion that laws should be highly specific and detailed so that administrative execution could be as neutral and technical as possible. In the extreme, one could envision a perfect politics-administration dichotomy. Blithely accepting such a dichotomy, as was commonly done for much of the twentieth century, often led to the belief that administrative leadership was either an anomaly or even a corruption of democratic theory, and that the people's legislative representatives should be responsible for all policy decision making, no matter how trivial. Putting this well-rehearsed normative debate aside, the reality by the mid-twentieth century was that government in a modern society was so large, that its role was frequently designed to be so proactive, and that the sophistication of the problems it dealt with so complex and dynamic, that the delegation of substantial responsibility to administrators was not only imperative, but simply impossible to avoid. Senior administrators draft policies for legislation, make important legal interpretations, have significant

financial discretion, and ultimately adjust agency mission to meet its evolving environment and resources. Junior administrators' orbit of responsibility may be enormously narrowed, but their roles at the program level generally mirror these same responsibilities. In the end, a program's success may be more determined by an administrator's ability to foresee and forestall problems, encourage and support employees, fight for scarce resources, make coherent and defensible exceptions, and adjust the program mission to an evolving situation than the quality of the policy itself!

Due to this antipathy toward centralized executive power even at the political level, and the outright denial of a role for administrative leadership, had allowed the field of administrative leadership to lag, and left administrators-in-training in the cold long after their business counterparts in MBA programs had started self-consciously addressing organizational leadership. Fortunately, as this essay will discuss, this is changing relatively dramatically, as the theory, materials, and embrace of administrative leadership as an important area has expanded by leaps and bounds.

Some of the Challenges in the Study and Teaching of Leadership

The "sometimes virtues" of the study of leadership can become a liability in the introduction of leadership research to neophytes and in the ability to teach leadership effectively. Some of those virtues are the immediacy of the topic to everyone, the depth of the

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literature, and the breadth of perspectives. The trick, of course, is to provide the new initiate a good enough roadmap to entice them to further study, and to provide classroom experiences that are both open to a variety of perspectives, but in a fashion disciplined enough so that coherent analysis occurs.

The Challenge of Getting Beyond the Superficial

Since everyone has experienced leadership, it turns out that everyone has an opinion about it (sometimes strong ones) before they ever pick up a book about it or read a thoughtful article on the subject (much less practice it on the scale that they may want to comment on it). On one hand this can be useful because there is a world of examples that can be quickly referenced. But it also can be an enormous challenge to get people to be more analytic in a massively complex subject. Good leadership can be taught in an hour or less if one is only interested in the platitudinal level—be courageous, innovative, honest, inclusive, articulate, knowledgeable, etc. At their worst, such “insights” imply that people might confuse good leaders with those who are timid, uncreative, untrustworthy, hierarchical, inarticulate, uninformed, etc. Yes, most of us can identify good leaders when we see them most of the time. But some of the more interesting and important questions are: Why are so many leaders mediocre, if not failures, if the principles of leadership are so apparent? Why is it that one leader can have numerous weaknesses and yet be a success, and another can have a single flaw and be a disaster? Can we improve our own leadership ability?

Let us begin by examining just one interesting and highly pertinent question. Can we predict the type of leader who would be successful in a particular agency or position? Because situations vary so much, so do the most critical competencies that must be emphasized. We can consider the common military example to explore how leadership is not as monolithic as we sometimes suppose. The customary examples give us generals in battle and the requisite daring, courage, analytic insight, and charisma that such leaders typically exhibit. But are generals in peacetime no *less* leaders when they plan for the next war by reexamining the changing circumstances of different opponents, situations, and technology? Are generals who are in support functions behind the lines (and therefore relying on different critical competencies such as operations planning and consistency) *not* leaders because they do not directly face the enemy? Thus predicting the type of leader we need in particular situations is complex, not only because such situations vary so much and evolve so quickly, but also because it requires us to be able to discern those qualities accurately in the leaders selected.

The Overwhelming Size of the Literature

Bernard Bass’s authoritative third edition of his *Handbook of Leadership: Theory, Research, and Managerial Applications* had already expanded to over 7,500 scholarly references in 1990. That doubled again in the fourth edition (Bass 2008) The nonscholarly literature not cited was certainly of equal size. Hundreds of credible articles and books now appear on the subject

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every year, making both access to the field and keeping up with it a challenge. Although the prodigious size of the literature is both understandable (given its complexity and the general interest) and an overall asset to the field, it does make the study of leadership difficult to navigate. Related to this is the vast number of theories, concepts, and terms used by different schools of thought and practice.

Dizzying Complexity of Perspectives

Although there are times for simplicity and grand generalizations in the study of leadership, this is generally not where significant insights come for those trying to improve practice, nor is it where the normal science of leadership research should be focused. Leadership varies significantly by the field of interest in politics, social action movements, intellectual movements, education, and the organizational universe, among others.

Just one area, organizational leadership, is so vast that it encompasses the private, public and nonprofit sectors, which certainly have many critical dissimilarities. Two enormously significant issues within organizational leadership are the level and purpose of study. Leaders are not just the chief executive officers but include those at various levels within the organization. What are the critical similarities and differences between supervisors, managers and executives? Beyond hierarchical distinctions based on different types of responsibility, function, and authority, there are important distinctions among the roles of informal

leaders, emergent leaders, and engaged followers in the leadership process (such as helping in the replacement of retiring or dysfunctional leaders).

The focus of inquiry is probably the single most important question an instructor can ask her or himself. To what degree is the focus for practitioners to improve themselves as leaders or leaders-in-the-making and to what degree is it to inform scholars (and practitioners) of the theoretical and conceptual trends and distinctions? Is one going to focus primarily on the many theories in the field or is one going to take a more micro-level approach by focusing on some of the dozens of specific skills and competencies (recommended by those theories) at which leaders need to be proficient? Nor does this account for the many special emphases that may be of interest such as the role of ethics, gender, culture, crisis, and history in leadership.

If instructors decide to focus on the more practical side, which is especially appropriate in organizational training sessions, for undergraduates, and for most masters-level students, then the theoretical review may be more limited, perhaps half of the time, and the focus on applications will be higher as will the time spent in competency development. The textbook selected will likewise focus more on applications and skills in the particular venue (e.g., public sector or nonprofit organizations). Students may be asked to participate in simulations, analyze leaders they know personally or as public figures using particular conceptual tools, analyze their own leadership abilities via assessments, write

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critiques of particular situations (case studies), etc. Auxiliary readings will include more from practitioners with their more biographical and personal approaches.

The focus of instructors may be to concentrate more on the academic side with a thorough review of all major theories. This is appropriate in some masters level classes and most classes exclusively or primarily for doctoral students. Here the focus will be to get the students to read as many primary sources as possible and analyze the distinctions among the theories. Readings will focus primarily on empirical studies, classic scholarly pieces, and methodological approaches used in the normal science of leadership.

The purpose of elucidating these challenges is to encourage those studying and teaching in the area to consider their goals before plunging into the endeavor. Next we consider some of the topics more fully, starting with the types of leadership.

Major Types of Leadership

Leadership is such a broadly-used concept that it can be ambiguous if not defined more narrowly. One way to define types of leadership is by the kind of “followers” being led. Another is by the nature of work that is the primary focus of the leader. Some leaders spend most of their time with followers over whom they have authority, such as employees; other leaders primarily represent their followers, such as constituents (e.g., voters); and still other leaders do not have

authority over or direct authority from followers, but nonetheless have intellectual sway over adherents as role models, through their creativity, or because of their ideological clarity. Additionally, the work of leaders can vary in fundamentally different ways. Some people are leaders because they are in charge of getting things done (execution); others are leaders because they are in charge of determining policies; and still others are leaders because they come up with new ideas that others emulate or admire.

The main focus of most classes in public administration and nonprofit management programs is on leaders who have a primary or determining role with employees. The best examples of organizational leaders who focus on execution and implementation are managers. Managers have programs to run, projects to complete, and deadlines to meet. Organizational leaders who focus on the policies that their employees execute and are either empowered to make exceptions or recommend policy changes to legislative bodies are either management executives or political executives. For example, a city manager routinely provides policy alternatives to the city council and a strong mayor (one who acts as the chief executive officer) still hires and fires department heads in addition to their role as policy leader. The organizational leader focused on new ideas is a transformational leader who can be found at any level in the organization where the planned change efforts are being attempted.

Leadership also occurs outside organizational settings. Leaders can also hold their formal or informal

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positions by satisfying constituents. The ability to reward and punish is usually negligible, but they do rely on their position, expertise and personal popularity. Such leaders who are interested in getting things done generally have volunteers rather than employees; community leaders such as those in charge of the local PTA or a volunteer community project director function in this way. Legislators are an example of leaders who have constituents and focus on policy, as are advisory board members. Lobbyists and policy entrepreneurs represent constituents and bring new ideas to legislators and executives.

Finally, some leaders have neither much formal power stemming from a formal position, nor the ability to reward or punish; nonetheless, they have a powerful influence on others. Such leaders rely primarily on their

expertise or force of personality alone. A small group of people who are thrown together for first time and yet who must get a project done quickly will find that one or two people will emerge as leaders. On a broader scale, some leaders without traditional organizations actively encourage specific social change (policy change) by some combination of reason, passion, and personality. Think of the influence of Mahatma Ghandi, Ralph Nader, or Rachel Carson (author of *The Silent Spring* and a philosophical founder of the environmental movement). Finally, some leaders focus more on the newness of ideas rather than working on the specific policies that might need to be changed; examples of this category include philosophical zealots and social trend setters. Exhibit 1 identifies these different types of leaders.

Exhibit 1: A Simplified View of Different Types of Leaders

		Types of Work		
		Execution	Policy	New ideas
Types of followers	Employees	Managers	Executives with policy responsibilities	Transformational leaders
	Constituents	Community leaders of volunteer groups	Legislators and advisory board members	Lobbyists & policy entrepreneurs
	Adherents	Small group leaders	Leaders of social movements	Philosophical zealots and social trend setters

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Of course, leaders often cross these conceptual distinctions because they carry out several types of leadership simultaneously or change their leadership roles over time. Political executives who may emphasize employees or constituents depending on their preferences and background are excellent examples of dual leadership types. Presidents and governors are both the putative heads of enormous organizations and at the same time they recommend legislative initiatives and enact laws by signing them. George H. Bush (senior) was himself a bureaucrat by training, kept a close eye on the morale of the federal bureaucracy, and was personally responsible for several personnel initiatives. George W. Bush (junior) relied more heavily on his legislative background and focused almost solely on his constituents and policy. In terms of changing the type of leadership over time, leaders of social movements often acquire formal status. Famous examples in the 20th century include Nelson Mandela (South Africa), Lech Walesa (Poland), and Dae Jung Kim (Korea) who ended up being the leaders of their respective nations. Cindy Lightner of MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) started out as an outraged mother and ended up heading an organization that influenced legislative agendas across the country. Jimmy Carter left the presidency but has become a moral and civic leader in the fight for affordable housing in this country and fair elections around the globe.

The reason for making these distinctions, despite the fact that the lines can get blurred and some leaders practice multiple types, is that different competencies

are involved. Good legislators do not necessarily make good managers, and good managers frequently do not have the skills necessary to become elected officials. Think of the different skills needed to motivate workers versus voters. Managerial executives may have little taste or ability to stimulate social action and leaders of social movements may find themselves much criticized for their awkward management style when they do successfully create formal organizations. Consider on one hand the famous Robert Moses who amassed enormous administrative power which he used to reshape the New York City area into the modern city we know, but who was unable to win a single election. On the other hand, consider Mike Brown, the affable and well-meaning Director of FEMA during the Katrina-Rita Hurricanes, whose sole reliance on political skills left him exposed as an incompetent administrator unable to rise to the occasion. A focus on organizational leaders allows us to be more specific in our analysis of leadership guidelines than if the focus were on all types of leaders. Even though a focus on organizational leaders provides an opportunity for more powerful generalizations, important distinctions among organizational leaders are worth reviewing next.

Variations in Organizational Leadership

Many important distinctions can be made that affect the situations in which organizational leaders must operate. These distinctions can make a difference about which framework one uses in theoretical terms (e.g., classical management theory, transformational leadership theory, or self-leadership), as well as in

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practical competencies accentuated. Business leaders will tend to focus on market-driven needs and profits, public sector leaders on publicly-authorized needs and legal accountability, and nonprofit leaders on unmet public good needs and charity. Further, while not universally agreed-upon, most people hold that all those who lead others, no matter whether they are front-line supervisors or the heads of organizations, have leadership roles. Indeed, even lead workers can have important leadership roles. However, the type of leadership practiced will vary. The front-line supervisor will tend to focus on task completion, while at the other extreme executive will focus on intellectual tasks such as policy planning and systems design. The front-line supervisor will need good one-on-one interpersonal skills while the chief executive may need excellent public speaking skills (Katz 1955).

Another important distinction is between the types of leadership exhibited in different fields, or even in different parts of a large organization. Agencies (or parts of agencies) that focus on regulation have slightly different emphases than those focusing on service, and both of these are a bit different than the emphasis of a self-funded or entrepreneurial agency or department. Commanders in law enforcement agencies and managers in accounting divisions tend to have different styles than managers in park services, public gaming agencies or self-funded public fairgrounds. Such distinctions should not be exaggerated since most of the basic principles of public sector leadership still apply; nonetheless it is important to realize that significant, nuanced differences do exist.

The amount of change in the environmental context is another important difference. Examples of environments calling for change in public agencies include: calls for resource reduction (e.g., tax cuts), demands for major service increases with or without resource increases, perceptions of poor management or scandal, opportunities to improve through major technological changes, mandated mergers or separations of agencies or divisions, or impending management crises such as declining recruitment standards and increasing turnover. With a more turbulent public sector environment, as well as enormous growth in the nonprofit sector, change management skills have become far more important in the last quarter century.

Other useful distinctions to keep in mind when analyzing the situations of leaders are the maturity of the organization, the differences among line and staff, the differences in resource levels, and the size of the organization. Older organizations tend to have more established policies and a more delineated culture that must be followed, unless the needs for rejuvenation have become explicit and widely accepted. Line leaders (e.g., department heads) will focus more on employees and staff leaders (e.g., deputy directors not in charge of a department) will function more as an extension of their boss. Some agencies are well funded and are expected to function at a state-of-the-art level; other agencies are poorly funded and may be expected to “get by.” Leadership challenges in poorly funded agencies are generally more acute. Finally, the scope of

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leadership will vary significantly for leaders in large versus small agencies. Leaders in smaller agencies will need a wider array of skills, but may not be expected to be quite so sophisticated in them. The city manager of a small town may be directly involved in most hiring, budget planning, public relations and policy recommendation. The city manager of a large city will have specialists in each of these areas, and will spend more time coordinating these functions and presiding as a liaison between departments and the city council and as a figurehead to the community.

In summary, organizational leaders as a class have a great deal more in common with each other than they tend to have with leaders in other endeavors such as legislators. Nonetheless, organizational leaders work in different situations and those differences are important in analyzing their specific leadership roles, and thus the competencies they need to emphasize.

Next we turn to organizational leadership history. This will provide a brief introduction to the major schools of thought on the subject.

History of the Study of Organizational Leadership

Although the modern scientific study of leadership only dates from the turn of the 20th century, interest in leadership is implicit throughout history. For example, a fascinating look at leadership by Machiavelli (*The Prince*) is still a must-read in leadership studies because of its complex blend of idealism and practicality.

Leaders need to maintain order, continuity, and political independence, preferably through the esteem of the people and fairness, but should be willing and able to use guile, threats, and violence as necessary, according to the medieval commentator.

The implicit theory about leadership immediately prior to the “scientific” studies of the twentieth century was dominated by the “great man” thesis. Particular great men (women were invariably overlooked despite great women in history such as Joan of Arc, Elizabeth I, and Clara Barton) somehow move history forward due to their exceptional characteristics as leaders. The stronger version of this theory holds that history is handmaiden to men; great men actually change the shape and direction of history. A milder version of the theory is that as history proceeds in its irrevocable course, a few men and women will move history forward substantially and dramatically because of their greatness, especially in moments of crisis or great social need. Although these lines of thinking have more sophisticated echoes later in the trait and situational leadership periods, “hero worship” is certainly alive and well in popular culture and in biographies and autobiographies. It has as its core a belief that there are only a few, very rare individuals in any society at any time who have the unique characteristics to shape or express history. Although this thesis may serve sufficiently for case studies (essentially biographies), it is effectively nonrefutable and therefore unusable as a scientific theory, and it is generally unsatisfying as the primary leadership teaching tool.

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The scientific mood of the early twentieth century fostered the development of a more focused search for the basis of leadership. What traits and characteristics do leaders seem to share in common? Researchers developed personality tests and compared the results of average individuals with those perceived to be leaders. By the 1940s, researchers had amassed very long lists of traits from numerous psychologically oriented studies (Bird 1940; Jenkins 1947). This tactic had two problems. First, the lists became longer and longer as research continued. Second, and more important, the traits and characteristics identified were not powerful predictors across situations. For example, leaders have to be decisive but they must also be flexible and inclusive. On the surface, these traits are contradictory. Without situational specificity, the endless list of traits offers little prescriptive assistance and descriptively becomes nothing more than a long laundry list. In 1948, Ralph Stogdill published a devastating critique of *pure* trait theory, which subsequently fell into disfavor as being too unidimensional to account for the complexity of leadership (Stogdill 1948).

The next major thrust looked at the situational contexts that affect leaders and attempted to find meaningful patterns for theory building and useful advice. One early example was the work that came out of the Ohio State Leadership Studies (Shartle 1950; Hemphill 1950; Hemphill and Coons 1957). These studies began by testing 1,800 statements related to leadership behavior. By continually distilling the behaviors, researchers arrived at two underlying factors: consideration and the initiation of structure. Consideration describes a variety

of behaviors related to the development, inclusion, and good feelings of subordinates. The initiation of structure describes a variety of behaviors related to defining roles, control mechanisms, task focus, and work coordination both inside and outside the unit. Coupled with the humanist/human relations revolution that was occurring in the 1950s and 1960s, these (and similar studies) spawned a series of useful, if often simplistic and largely bimodal, theories. Arygris's maturity theory (1957), Likert's motivational approach (1959) and McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y (1960) implicitly encourage more consideration in all leadership behavior. This line of thinking was further advanced and empirically tested by Fiedler, who developed a contingency theory and related leader-match theory (1967; Fiedler, Chemers, and Mahar 1976). Blake and Mouton's (1964, 1965) managerial grid recommends leaders be highly skilled in both task behaviors (initiating structure) and people-oriented behaviors (consideration). Hersey and Blanchard's life-cycle theory (1969, 1972) relates the maturity of the followers (both in terms of expertise and attitude) to the ideal leader behavior—telling (directing), selling (consulting), participating, and delegating.

These early situational theories were certainly useful as an antidote to the excessively hierarchical, authoritarian styles that had developed in the first half of the twentieth century with the rise and dominance of large organizations in both the private and public sectors. They were also useful as teaching tools for incipient and practicing managers who appreciated the uncomplicated models even though they were

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descriptively simplistic. As a class, however, these theories failed to meet scientific standards because they tried to explain too much with too few variables. Although the situational perspective still forms the basis of most leadership theories today, it has largely done so either in a strictly managerial context (i.e., a narrow level of analysis) on a factor-by-factor basis or it has been subsumed in more comprehensive approaches to leadership at the macro level.

While ethical dimensions were occasionally mentioned in the mainstream literature, the coverage was invariably peripheral because of the avoidance of value-laden (normative) issues by social scientists. The first major text devoted to ethical issues was Robert Greenleaf's book, *Servant Leadership* (1977). James Macgregor Burns's book on leadership burst on the scene in 1978 and had unusually heavy ethical overtones. However, it was not the ethical dimension that catapulted it to prominence but its transformational theme, which is discussed below. Both Greenleaf (a former business executive) and Burns (a political scientist) were outside the usual leadership academic circles whose members came primarily from business and psychology backgrounds. A number of contemporary mainstream leadership theorists, both popular and academic, such as DePree (1989), Rost (1990), Block (1993), Gardner (1989), Bennis et al. (1994, in contrast with his other work), and Zand (1997), continue in this tradition, to one degree or another. This theme was covered earlier and more frequently (at least in terms of ethical uses of

discretion) in the public sector literature and will be discussed separately.

Until 1978, the focus of the mainstream literature was on leadership at lower levels, which was amenable to small-group and experimental methods with simplified variable models, while executive leadership (with its external demands) and more amorphous abilities to induce large-scale change were largely ignored. Burns's book on leadership dramatically changed that interest by introducing the notion that only transactional leadership was being studied and that the other highly important arena—transformational leadership—was largely being ignored. This struck an especially responsive chord in the nonexperimental camp, which had already been explicitly stating that at the time there was an abundance of managers (who use a “transactional” mode) and a serious deficit of leaders (who use a “transformational” mode) (Zaleznik 1977). Overall, this school of thought agreed that leaders have special responsibility for understanding a changing environment, they facilitate more dramatic changes, and they often can energize followers far beyond what traditional exchange theory would suggest. Overstating for clarity, three subschools emerged that emphasized different aspects of these “larger-than-life” leaders. The transformational school emphasized vision and overarching organizational change (e.g., Burns 1978; Bass 1985; Bennis and Nanus 1985; and Tichy and Devanna 1986). The charismatic school focused on the influence processes of individuals and the specific behaviors used to arouse inspiration and higher levels of action in followers (e.g., House 1977; Conger and

Kanungo 1998; and Meindl 1990). Less articulated in terms of leadership theory was an entrepreneurial school that urged leaders to make practical process and cultural changes that would dramatically improve quality or productivity; it shared a change emphasis with the transformational school and an internal focus with the charismatic school (Peters and Austin 1985; Hammer and Champy 1993; and Champy 1995).

In the 1990s and to the current time, a number of trends have produced a more multifaceted perspective on leadership studies. First, transformation and charismatic approaches provided a necessary balancing of the field in terms of executives versus supervisors, managerial operational approaches versus strategic and change perspectives, etc. (e.g., O'Shea et al. 2009; Parolini, Patterson, and Winston 2009; Rowold and Heinitz 2007; Vecchio, Justin, and Pearce 2008). Second, methods continued to improve in terms of the creation of high quality outlets such as *Leadership Quarterly* and *Journal of Leadership Studies*. Further, empirical studies and methods started to undergo long-term improvement in terms of levels of analysis (Yammarino et al. 2005; Yammarino and Dansereau 2008). Third, horizontal leadership approaches were much better articulated. Also known as distributed leadership, the development of leadership around teams, self-leadership, "superleadership" (i.e., developing and mentoring leaders), substitutes for leadership, and shared leadership (e.g., Burke et al. 2006; Day, Gronn, and Salas 2006; Gronn 2002; Kellerman 2008). Horizontal leadership also has also had an extremely strong inter-organizational dimension

related to networking and collaboration among entities (e.g., Arganoff 2008; Kettl 2006; Lemay 2009; McGuire 2006). Fourth and not surprisingly, there were fresh efforts to find integrative models were common in the 1990s (Hunt 1996; Chemers 1997; Yukl 1998) and beyond (Avolio 2007; Boal and Hooijberg 2001; Fernandez 2005; Yukl 2002). Fifth, there was a great interest in postmodern themes being translated into leadership research contexts. Thus, many researchers in leadership studies (a) questioned the dominance of empirical positivism as a methodology, (b) questioned the implicit acceptance of the goals of formal leaders, (c) emphasized chaos theory and the importance of tipping points and butterfly effects, (d) took a more robust systems approach in terms of looking at leadership as a process in which the leader was only a part, and (e) embraced more culturally diverse perspectives related to gender, national setting, and localized needs (e.g., Chen 2008; Collinson 2006; Edwards 2009; Newman, Guy, and Mastracci 2009; O'Spina and Dodge 2005; Osborn and Hunt 2007; Uhl-Bien, Marion, and McKelvey 2007).

Exhibit 2 provides a brief summary of the eras of mainstream leadership theory and research. However, given such a brief space, this cursory review does not do justice to the wealth of perspectives on specific leadership topics such as the types of leaders, leader styles, the types and effects of followers, and the relevance of societal and organizational cultures on leadership.

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Opportunities for research abound as the field of administrative leadership matures and the public sector environment shifts dramatically with new responsibilities and challenges following the worldwide fiscal crisis of 2008. First, there can never be too many good studies testing the dozens of well-known theories and concepts in specific settings. This is the normal science that gives a field an opportunity to exercise rigor and attain precision. Second, comparative studies are always in demand, no matter whether it is between private and public settings (e.g., Thach and Thompson 2007), different national settings, local versus state versus federal contexts, etc. Third, there are always opportunities for fresh perspectives in a field as broad and challenging as leadership studies. The caveats are that good studies have to be anchored in the literature, and use methods thoughtfully and not overstate conclusions.

Exhibit 2. Eras of Leadership Theory and Research

<u>Era</u>	<u>Major Time Frame</u>	<u>Major Characteristics/Examples of Proponents</u>
Great Man	Pre-1900; continues to be popular in biographies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on emergence of a great figure such as a Napoleon, George Washington, or Martin Luther who has substantial affect on society. • Era influenced by notions of rational social change by uniquely talented and insightful individuals.
Trait	1900-1948; resurgence of recognition of importance of natural talents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on the individual traits (physical, personal, motivational, aptitudes) and skills (communication and ability to influence) that leaders bring to all leadership tasks. • Era influenced by scientific methodologies in general (especially industrial measurement) and scientific management in particular (e.g., the definition of roles and assignment of competencies to those roles).
Contingency	1948-1980s; continues as basis of most rigorous models but with vastly expanded situational repertoire	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on the situational variables with which leaders must deal, especially performance and follower variables. Shift from traits and skills to behaviors (e.g. informing and delegating versus consult and motivating). Dominated by bimodal models in its heyday. • Era influenced by the rise of human relations theory, behavioral science (in areas such a motivation theory), and the use of small group experimental designs in psychology. • Examples emphasizing bimodal models include Ohio, Michigan, Hersey-Blanchard, managerial grid, ; leadership theory involving maximal levels of participation (generally with 3-7 major variables) included Fiedler, House, Vroom.
Transformational	1978 to present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on leaders who create change in deep structures, major processes, or overall culture. Leader mechanisms may be compelling vision, brilliant technical insight, and/or charismatic quality. • Era influenced by the loss of American dominance in business, finance, and science, and the need to re-energize various industries which had slipped into complacency. • Examples (academic and popular) include Burns, House, Bennis, Iacocca, Kouzes and Posner, Senge, Tichy and Devanna, Bass and Conger
Servant	1979 to present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on the ethical responsibilities to followers, stakeholders, and society. Business theorists tend to emphasize service to followers; political theorists emphasize citizens; public administration analysts tend emphasize legal compliance and/or citizens • Era influenced by social sensitivities raised in the 1960s and 1970s. • Early proponents include Greenleaf and Burns. Contemporary and popular proponents include DuPree, Covey, Rost, Autry, Peter Vaill, John Gardner
Multifaceted	1990s to present	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasis on integrating the major schools, especially the transactional schools (trait and behavior issues largely representing management interests) and transformational schools (visionary, entrepreneurial, and charismatic). • Robust theory integrating distributed or horizontal leader approaches. Additionally, network and collaboration theory significantly affect leadership studies in terms of community, interorganizational effectiveness and public space considerations. • Most-modern themes such as chaos theory, complexity theory, and affective theory emerge as modern methods and assumptions are increasingly questioned.

A Review of the Leadership Literature in *PAR* and Some Additional Bibliography

A brief review of the literature in *PAR* is useful to get a sense of the trends in administrative leadership. (For a more in-depth analysis, see “Public Sector Leadership Theory: An Assessment” Van Wart, 2003 and *Administrative Leadership in the Public Sector*, Van Wart and Dicke, eds., 2008). In the 1940s, articles by Finer (1940) and Leys (1943) define the administrative discretion debate which was again taken up so vigorously in the 1990s. Donald Stone’s 1945 “Notes on the Government Executive: His Role and His Method” is a wonderful and fresh piece even today. Few studies concentrated on leadership in the 1950s through the 1970s except in book reviews. Articles that touched on leadership tended to be generalist, non-empirical pieces, except for a piece by Golembiewski that identified the small group literature vis-à-vis leadership emergence. The 1980s saw an upsurge in the interest in leadership, reflecting the same upsurge in the mainstream literature. Topics included management versus leadership (Dillio, 1989), training and development issues (Likert, 1981; Flanders and Utterback, 1985; Faerman, Quinn, and Thompson, 1987), creativity (Stone, 1981; Dimock, 1986), followership (Gilbert and Hyde 1988), and action planning (Young and Norris, 1988).

Since the 1990s, innumerable articles have indirectly related to leadership because of the debate about administrative discretion, administrative entrepreneurship, and the role of leaders in conserving

while advancing the public interest in a democratic system. A hallmark example would be Terry’s “Administrative Leadership, Neo-Managerialism, and the Public Management Movement” (1998). Some of the best articles focusing directly on administrative leadership, most with a greater empirical focus, have included Hennessey (1998), Moon (1999), Considine and Lewis (1999), Borins (2000), Javidian and Waldman (2003), Trottier, Van Wart, and Wang (2008), McCabe, et al. (2008), and volume 69(1) of *PAR* regarding affective leadership and emotional labor.

In a short essay which is not exclusively bibliographic in thrust such as this one, it is easy to leave off important books that one may want to use as texts, or that an instructor may simply want to use for student book review or essays. Some of the books that have not yet been mentioned but are among those commonly used as primary and secondary references include: Bolman and Deal (2003) who use four frames to explain leadership, Kouzes and Posner (1987) with their popular consideration and transformational approach, Morse, Buss and Kinghorn (2007) whose edited volume provides a variety of perspectives, Van Wart (2005, 2008) whose first book is scholarly treatment of theories and competencies and whose second book is written as a textbook for university students. Several important books that reflect a policy or community leadership thrust include: Bryson and Crosby (1992) who survey leadership from a strategic community needs perspective, and Heifetz (1994) who looks at the challenges of policy makers who often must lead by forcing antagonistic parties to keep talking

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until resolution can be found. Some additional books that are of general or special interest to the field that are classics and accessible to students include: Conger and Kanungo (1998) which is a transformational leadership classic, Denhardt and Denhardt (2005) who compare leadership to dance, Manz (1992) and Manz and Sims (1989) who look at self-leadership and leadership as teaching others, Mintzberg (1973) whose management classic still provides a powerful analysis of what leaders actually do, Pearce and Conger (2003) who provide a brilliant analysis of shared leadership types, Selznick (1957) whose old-fashioned classic nonetheless provides an excellent review of the timeless characteristics of leadership, Terry (1995) who does a superb job of placing public leadership in its special “conservator” role, Vroom and Jago (1988) who provide an insightful and detailed analysis of one of the most critical competencies—decision making, Wheatley (1992) who applies chaos theory to leadership and management, and Whicker (1996) who examines the dark side of leadership in a readable way .

Perennial Debates in Leadership Theory

Another way to analyze the leadership literature is to examine major debates that have shaped both leadership paradigms and research agendas. For simplicity, only four of the broadest are discussed here: What should leaders focus on? Does leadership make a difference? Are leaders born or made? What is the best style to use?

What Should Leaders Focus on? Technical Performance, Development of People, or Organizational Alignment?

We expect leaders to “get things done,” to maintain good systems, to provide the resources and training for production, to foster efficiency and effectiveness through various controls, to make sure that technical problems are handled correctly, and to coordinate functional operations. These and other more technical aspects of production are one level of leadership focus. It is particularly relevant for leadership at the lower levels of the organization closest to production.

Another perspective is that leaders do not do the work; they depend on followers to actually do the work. Therefore, followers’ training, motivation, maturation and continued development, and overall satisfaction are critical to production and organizational effectiveness. As one popular writer notes: “The signs of outstanding leadership appear primarily among the followers” (DePree 1989, 12). Indeed, as stated by foremost researchers studying the stumbling blocks for leaders: “Many studies of managerial performance have found the most critical skill for beginning managers, and one most often lacking, is interpersonal competence, or the ability to deal with ‘people problems’” (McCall, Lombardo, and Morrison 1988, 19).

The emergence of the transformational leadership paradigm in the 1980s brought forth the idea that “the essential function of leadership is to produce adaptive or useful change” (Kotter 1990). Similarly, Edgar

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Schein asserted that “*the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture*” (1985, 2, emphasis in original). Indeed, it was popular to assert that “true” leaders delegated management issues and focused squarely on the “big picture” and big changes. The more extreme rhetoric has subsided, but the perspective has not disappeared.

Certainly not a major theme in the mainstream, if not altogether absent, was the additional notion that leadership is service to the people, end consumers, society, and the public interest (rather than followers per se). While it is common for biographies of religious and social leaders to advance this most strongly, exemplars in public service do so nearly as strongly (e.g., Cooper and Wright 1992; Riccucci 1995). This notion does not displace technical performance, follower development, or organizational alignment, but often largely downplays these dimensions as “givens.”

Lastly and logically, leadership can be seen as a composite of several or all of these notions. When we think of great leaders, we typically think of people who contribute in all domains. Alexander the Great not only reinvented warfare and realigned the world, but his men happily followed him as he conquered previously unknown lands. Such a composite perspective has both logical and emotional appeal. Leaders typically are called upon to do and be all these things—perform, develop followers, align their organizations, and foster the common good. Yet it also sidesteps the problem to some degree. Most leaders must make difficult choices about what to focus on and what they themselves

should glean from the act of leadership. This begs the question, how do leaders make the correct choice of definition and emphasis? For an array of possible definitions related to administrative leadership, see Exhibit 3.

To What Degree Does Leadership Make a Difference?

Burns (1978, 265) tells the cynical story of a Frenchman sitting in a café who hears a disturbance, runs to the window, and cries: “There goes the mob. I am their leader. I must follow them!” Such a story suggests that, at a minimum, we may place too great an emphasis on the effect that leaders have. The question, “Do leaders make a difference?” is essentially philosophical at its loftiest level because we are unable to provide meaningful control groups to define what leadership means other than in operational terms. Yet, the answer is generally yes, leaders do make a difference. Nonetheless, it is important to remember that leaders do not act in a vacuum; they are a part of the flow of history and set in a culture with an environment filled with crises, opportunities, and even dumb luck. In practical terms, however, the question about whether leaders make (any) difference generally gets translated into the questions of how much difference and when.

Exhibit 3. Possible Definitions of Leadership in an Administrative Context

Leadership can focus strictly on the ends—e.g., getting things done (technical performance), the means by which things get done—e.g., the followers (their motivation and development), or aligning the organization with external needs and opportunities (which can result in substantive change). A definition of leadership can also emphasize the spirit with which leadership is conducted: in the public sector this is invariably a public service commitment. Generally definitions are a blend of several of these elements but with different emphases. One's definition tends to vary based on normative preferences and one's concrete situation and experience.

1. Administrative leadership is the process of providing the results required by authorized systems in an efficient, effective, and legal manner.

(This narrower definition might apply well to a front-line supervisor and would tend to be preferred by those endorsing strict political accountability.)

2. Administrative leadership is the process of developing/supporting followers who provide the results.

(Since all leaders have followers, and since it is the followers who actually perform the work and provide its quality, it is better to focus on them than the direct service/product. This is a common view in service industries with mottoes such as Our Employees Are Our Number 1 Priority.)

3. Administrative leadership is the process of aligning the organization with its environment, especially the necessary macro-level changes, and realigning the culture as appropriate.

(This definition tends to fit executive leadership better and emphasizes the “big picture.” Many public sector analysts are concerned about the application of this definition because of a breakdown in democratic accountability.)

4. The key element to administrative leadership is its service focus.

(Although leadership functions and foci may vary, administrative leaders need to be responsive, open, aware of competing interests, dedicated to the common good, etc. so that they create a sense of public trust for their stewardships roles.)

5. Leadership is a composite of providing technical performance, internal direction to followers, external organizational direction—all with a public service orientation.

(This definition implicitly recognizes the complex and demanding challenge for leaders; however, it eschews the tough decision about defining the proper emphasis or focus that leaders may need to—and operationally do—make.)

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In its various permutations, the question of how much difference leaders make takes up the largest part of the literature, especially when the question relates to the effect of specific behaviors, traits, and skills or their clusters. At a more global level, the transformational and “great-man” devotees assert that great leaders can make a great difference. Some of the best practical writers, however, caution that leaders’ effects are modest only because of the great constraints and inertia they face (e.g., Barnard 1938; Gardner 1989). It is also likely that this wisdom is directed largely at the excessive reliance on formal authority and insulated rationalistic thinking that some inexperienced or weaker leaders exhibit.

At the level of the discrete effects of individual or clustered behaviors, the comparisons are easier for social scientists. For example, how much difference does monitoring followers make, versus scanning the environment, and, of course, in what situational contexts? One important variant line of research examines the substitutes of leadership (Kerr and Jermier 1978). That is, some organizations over time acquire positive features that diminish the need for leadership in some task and interpersonal situations.

Another particularly important dimension of the question about the effect of leadership relates to the levels at which leadership occurs. At the extreme, some theorists emphasize leadership that is almost exclusively equivalent to grand change (Zaleznik 1977), while minimizing and even denigrating the notion that leadership occurs throughout the organization. On the

contrary, the small group research of the 1950s through the 1970s suggests that leadership is fundamentally similar at any level. Some research, especially the customer service and excellence literature, emphasizes the importance of frontline supervisors (Peters 1994; Buckingham and Coffman 1999). The more comprehensive models of the current leadership literature tend to emphasize the idea that there are different types of leadership required at different levels, especially because of the increasing levels of discretion allowed as one moves higher in the organization (Hunt 1996). Different levels simply require different types of skills (Katz 1955).

Are Leaders Born or Made?

An implicit assumption of the great-man theories is that leaders (invariably heads of state and of major businesses such as banks and mercantile houses) are essentially born, probably allowing for some significant early training as well. That is, you either have the “stuff” of leadership or you do not, and most do not. Of course, in an age when leadership generally required either membership in the privileged classes (i.e., the “right stuff” included education, wealth, connections, and senior appointments) or, in rare instances, extraordinary brilliance (such as Napoleon’s) in a time of crisis, there was more than a little truth to this. In a more democratic era, such factors have less force, especially insofar as leadership is conceived so much more inclusively.

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Today the question is generally framed as one of degree, rather than as a strict dichotomy. To what degree can leaders be “made” and how? The developmental portion has two major components according to most researchers and thoughtful practitioners. While part of leadership is the result of formal training, this may actually be the smaller component. Experience is likely the more important teacher. In the extreme, this position states that while leadership cannot be taught, it can be learned. As Nietzsche noted, “a man has no ears for that which experience has given him no access.” Of course, random career paths might or might not provide a useful string of experiences, and a mentor might or might not be present to help the learner to extract significant lessons from both the challenges and failures that experience provides. Ideally, high-potential leaders-in-the-making get appropriate rotational assignments.

More formal training is not without its virtues, too, providing technical skills and credibility, management knowledge, external awareness, coaching, and encouragement toward reflection. Leaders must have (or in some instances acquire) the basic technical knowledge of the organization, often more for credibility than for the executive function itself; formal training can assist greatly here. Management is a different profession altogether from doing line work; again, training can greatly facilitate the learning process, especially for new managers. Formal leadership training, when properly done, is excellent for providing an awareness of different models of managing and

leading for different situations, often outside one’s own industry. Because mentors are hard to find, and *good* mentors are downright rare, formal training often plays this role, giving attendees a chance to process their experiences with instructors and fellow participants. Finally, good leaders more often than not are people of action, which means that opportunities for reflection are even more important for leadership improvement; formal training structures opportunities for reflection, forcing doers to alternate thinking for action. Thus, while the black-and-white debate about leaders being made or born is largely considered sophomoric, the more sophisticated debate about the *relative* importance of innate abilities, experience (unplanned or rotational), and formal training is alive and well.

What Is the Best Style to Use?

Although leader style is really just an aggregation of traits, skills, and behaviors, it has been an extremely popular topic of research and debate in its own right. One of the most significant issues has been definitional: What is leader style? Although leader style can be thought of as the cumulative effect of *all* traits, skills, and behaviors, it is generally used to describe what is perceived as the key, or at least prominent, aspect of the universal set of leader characteristics. Examples include: follower participation, such as command, consign, consult, and concur styles (as discussed by Zand 1997, 43); change styles, such as risk-averse or risk-accepting; and personality styles, such as those based on the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. Other leader style definitions involve

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communication, individual versus group approaches to leadership, value orientations—especially involving integrity—and power and influence typologies.

A slightly different approach to the issue of style examines it in relation to function. Much of the situational literature addresses the style issue in this light. Leaders have to get work done (“initiate structure”) and work through people (“consideration”). How they are perceived to balance these factors can be operationally defined as their style. A somewhat different but very useful insight into functional style preference has to do with the type of situation that the leader prefers or excels in: a maintenance situation, a project or task force situation, a line versus function situation, a “start-up,” or turning a business around (McCall, Lombardo, and Morrison 1988).

Another important set of issues regarding style has to do with whether, and to what degree, style can be changed in adults. Not many have taken the hard line that changing style is nearly impossible. Fiedler (1967; Fiedler, Chemers, and Mahar 1976) is probably most prominent in this regard, largely advising that it is better to figure out the situation first, and find the appropriate leader second. Yet, even assuming that change in style is possible, most serious researchers warn against excessive expectations of dramatic change, although radical style-change anecdotes do pepper the popular literature. If style can be changed, then how it can be accomplished is the important issue that emerges (and this becomes largely an applied training issue). In addition to style need (situational demands),

style preference, and style range (a leader’s repertoire of different styles) is the issue of style quality. Each style requires an extensive set of skills that must be artfully integrated into an evolving situation, but that may be beyond the abilities of a particular neophyte manager or inept leader (House 1996).

Debates and Discussions in Administrative Leadership Theory

Although these debates have strong echoes in the public sector literature, the differences in the debate structures are as important as the similarities. Of the four major questions, only the first regarding focus is discussed as robustly in the public sector literature as it is the mainstream; indeed, from a normative philosophical basis, the administrative leadership literature probably argues this issue even more thoroughly. However, the question of proper focus is translated into the discretion debate, which has taken numerous forms affecting the proper role of administrative leaders. For the sake of simplicity, the first era (1883 to the 1940s) can be conceptualized as the time when a dichotomy between the political world of policy decisions and the neutral world of technical and neutral implementation was the overarching ideal. It was generally argued that good administrative leaders made many technical decisions but referred policy decisions to their political superiors. The role of discretion was largely ignored or downplayed. The second era (the 1940s to the 1980s), adopting a less idealistic model, recognized that the interplay of the political and administrative worlds is far more

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intertwined than a simple dichotomy would explain. The dominant model during this period was one of administrative responsibility, that is, the appropriate and modest use of significant discretion. The recent era (from the 1990s), driven by a worldwide governmental reform agenda, has interjected entrepreneurial uses of discretion for public administrators. The debate about what to reform in government (e.g., the size, cost, processes, structures, accountability mechanisms) and how to reform it has stirred huge controversies in the scholarly community. The newest model encourages creative and robust uses of discretion and diffuses authority among more stakeholders and control mechanisms.

The issue of discretion has shaped the proper-focus debate primarily in terms of a management orientation (transactional) versus a change orientation (transformational). If leaders should not exercise significant discretion or be too activist, then they should *not* play a substantial change role but should focus more on management issues. In a contrasting position, many in the New Public Management school (a widely diverse school of thought that unifies around the importance of public administrators and their role as managerial leaders and moral mainstays of the political system) echo the strains of the mainstream school of the 1980s in asserting that public administrators are uniquely qualified to play a large role that will otherwise leave a critical leadership lacuna.

The debate about the importance of leadership is much more muted and underdeveloped. Although some

argue from the perspective of democratic theory that administrative leaders should *not* be important from a strictly political perspective, most public administration scholars and almost all practitioners simply assume or assert the importance of public administrators. Unfortunately, there is a great tendency to treat all the situations in which leadership is important as a single monolith, rather than to explore the ramifications of different types of leadership in different contexts with varying missions, organizational structures, accountability mechanisms, environmental constraints, and so on. This means that the issues of the technology of leadership are much less articulated in the public sector than they are in the private sector.

The debate about whether leaders are born or made is also not particularly well developed from a theoretical perspective. In the 1960s, the situational models presented relatively elementary task–people matrices. Both task and people skills could be taught, and a more humanistic approach that was less reliant on directive styles was encouraged. This was adopted in the public sector literature. In the 1980s, when the mainstream field was searching for a more comprehensive and complex model, some good examples of sophisticated training models did emerge on the public sector side (Flanders and Utterback 1985; Faerman, Quinn, and Thompson 1987) but this part of the literature was largely dormant in the 1990s. The “born” side of the argument recognizes the importance of recruitment and selection of exceptional individuals. Such discussions have been relatively common in the human resource context, especially in reports recommending

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ways to strengthen the public sector (e.g., National Commission on the Public Service 2003, and the National Commission on State and Local Public Service 1993), but have not been integrated in an explicit leadership discussion.

Summary Regarding the Challenges of Teaching Leadership

Although there is a deep-seated interest in leadership, that does not always equate to the same level of interest in its more disciplined study. Although there is an enormous amount written about leadership annually, distilling through that avalanche of material is sometimes a challenge. And although the multitude of perspectives provides a wealth of potential insight, that very complexity can lead to a cacophony of views and confused or overwhelmed students.

The instructor, then, must decide what most makes sense for the intended audience. Some of the major questions are the following:

- Will the course be aimed primarily at a review of the expanse of theories about leadership or primarily at an action research level that focuses on skill development of specific competencies? Teaching about transformational leadership theory certainly does not teach students how to do transformation, which requires a complex mix of analytic, change management, and communication skills, among other competencies. Most university instructors focus on theories and some blend of analytic skills in terms of how to recognize the theoretical applicability of theories in a range of applied and relevant situations. Trainers, on the other hand, may purposely give short shrift to

theoretical coverage in order to have more concrete practice in skill and competency development.

- No matter which approach is used, will all theories be given essentially equivalent weight? Or will certain theoretical perspectives be given special attention and will some be omitted? Covering the field “equally” provides a broad base of knowledge and a sense of academic fair play, but may lead to a superficial treatment. Emphasizing a few theoretical perspectives allows time to focus on the literature of that area or for skill development, but ultimately preempts the broader study.
- What types of leadership, and the concomitant situations, will be emphasized given the audience? For example, if the audience is likely to be primarily entry, midlevel, and even senior managers in public and nonprofit organizations, then a management-oriented focus makes sense. If the audience is or will likely be public executives and policy leaders, a more political focus is called for.
- How much of a role will the important topics of ethics, power, and gender play in the course play?

Because there is never enough time, the audience is rarely as consistent as we would like, and the instructor’s own interests and expertise is also a factor, tough decisions need to be made about the structure of the class which can vary enormously. A critical aspect of a good course is stating the thrust of the class in the course objectives of the syllabus and in the first class, so that these decisions are self-conscious on the part of the instructor, and the students are provided with a realistic roadmap to a fascinating, but vast and multifaceted topic.

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