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LEADERSHIP STYLES

Leadership has been a topic of contentious debate since the time of the ancient philosophers. In the nineteenth century, philosophers explored the ways in which individuals gain and maintain leadership positions. With the emergence of psychology as a discipline, theories of leadership became more focused on individuals. Over the years, researchers have explored leadership from a number of different perspectives including behavioral, trait, and to a much lesser extent contextual. These elements generated a number of different, sometimes conflicting leadership theories. In the 21st century, researchers are exploring the need for new leadership prototypes to fit the changing world demographics.

Leadership Theories

Leadership psychology has its roots in the same era that the discipline of psychology was formed. Upon examining influential figures in history, philosophers of the 19th century developed what is known as the Great Man Theory (GMT). This theory

states that a person would achieve a leadership position based on favorable qualities such as charisma, intelligence, and wisdom. Criticism of this theory argues that it fails to acknowledge the effects of outside influences on a leader's behavior. Though largely discredited due to its restrictive nature, the GMT became a framework for future ideas and research into what constitutes a leader.

The study of human personality and heritability gave rise to the investigation of differences between people's traits. In the 1920's and 1930's trait theory surfaced as a dominant paradigm in personality psychology, and thus heavily influenced leadership studies. Trait psychologists looked to the traits that differentiated leaders from non-leaders. Neglectful of early GMT criticism, trait theorists believed that the qualities and abilities that comprise a leader are inherent or innate to that individual. In other words, there are some traits that are more suitable for leadership than others. Trait leadership explores the influence of certain traits and what they are rather than the behavior that makes them a leader. Trait theory evolved to focus on specific components of leadership that can be associated and attributed to a leader to determine their effectiveness.

Critiques of GMT and development of trait theory gave rise to the attempt to understand leadership from a behavioral perspective. Behavioral leadership techniques focus on the principle that a leader can be conditioned and taught to lead effectively as opposed to having the innate ability to lead as seen in trait theory. Favorable leadership traits are understood as behaviors and are applied through learning processes rather than identifying and isolating them within a person. Behavioral theories gave way to the use of training programs in the workplace to condition leaders with the behaviors seen as most effective and beneficial to the company.

In the 1940's and 1950's, two groundbreaking studies in behavioral leadership emerged in the field. Ralph Stodgill used 1800 leadership related statements with nine leadership dimensions to create the Leadership Behavior Description Questionnaire (LBDQ). The LBDQ was administered to a variety of groups including college students and faculty as well as military personnel. Stodgill found that not only is there no consistent pattern of traits among leaders but also that there were two distinct leadership types: consideration (people oriented) and initiating structure (task oriented) (1948). This inability to quantify traits among leaders rendered the GMT an incompetent assessment of leadership. In the GMT's place, behavioral styles like consideration and initiating structure provided a fresher understanding of leadership.

Contingency theories of leadership generally rely on the notion that a leader's effectiveness depends on numerous factors such as their personality, the work environment/culture, and the followers. Fred Fielder pioneered this theory in 1958 with his least preferred coworker scale (LPC), which is used to ask a leader which traits they find the least appealing in a coworker. Low LPC scores represent a task-driven leader while high LPC scores represent a relationship-focused leader.

Leadership Styles

German-American psychologist Kurt Lewin, known for his pioneering social, organizational, and applied psychological inquiries, was at the forefront of contemporary leadership psychology. He and his colleagues conducted numerous experiments concerning decision-making styles and their influence on three different styles of leadership:

- *Autocratic*: leader makes executive decisions without consultation of followers.

- *Democratic*: followers are involved in decision making but leader makes final decision based on group consensus.
- *Laissez-Faire*: minimal decision-making by the leader, followers make decisions on their own and deal with consequences on their own.

Transactional leadership is a managerial style focusing on the “help me help you” agreement between the leader and the follower. The leader either uses contingent rewards (explaining what must be done to gain a reward) or passive management by exception (using corrective techniques if follower behavior is substandard). The style is based on behavioral assumptions that individuals will follow in order to meet survival needs (longer hours for larger paycheck) and that leaders will operate within their environment and culture. Despite research demonstrating its relative ineffectiveness, this style is still popular today.

According to James Macgregor Burns, Transformational leadership (TF) is based on the idea that a leader should go beyond the exchange of bare living essentials and inspire followers to change their lives for the better. Burns criticized the simplicity of transactional leadership and its lack of fulfillment for the followers. Burns pointed to leaders such as Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Jr., John F. Kennedy, and Franklin D. Roosevelt who transformed not only many lives but also the culture and environment in which they existed. Burns emphasizes that leaders raise the ethical and moral standards, energize followers with their own empowerment, and promote corporate responsibility. Bernard M. Bass believed that TF leaders should focus on intrinsic motivation and positive development of followers, raising awareness of moral standards, clarifying goals,

ethical climate/ethical standards, encouragement to look beyond self-interest, appeal based on reason, and allowing freedom of choice.

Bass challenged Burns' notion that a leader was either transactional or TF claiming that leaders use both styles. Bass' approach includes four TF leadership components that are commonly referred to as the Four I's:

- *Idealized Influence*: match the follower's leadership prototype, be a role model they can respect, admire, and trust, put others' needs before their own, and behave consistently with values and principles of the group
- *Inspirational Motivation*: motivate by providing meaning and challenge to follower's tasks, arouse team spirit/cooperation, be enthusiastic and optimistic, and create desirable visions for the future
- *Intellectual Stimulation*: stimulate innovation and creativity by encouraging followers to question assumptions, reframe situations, and approach old problems from new perspectives.
- *Individualized Consideration*: act as coaches or mentors that foster personal development, provide learning opportunities in a supportive climate for growth, and tailor to the individual needs and desires of each follower.

The term transformational leadership is often used interchangeably with charismatic leadership because they both involve creating a vision as inspiration for followers. However, they are different in a number of important ways. Charismatic leadership often occurs in times of social crisis. Followers personally identify with a charismatic leader and are inspired by them to work toward a goal. Because the leader with a charismatic style is so extraordinary, they often inspire hatred among individuals

with different values. Also, while transformational style emphasizes the development, improvement, and empowerment of followers, charismatic style does not. Doing these behaviors might even serve to make the charismatic leader seem less exceptional.

More recently there has been an emphasis on leadership styles that involve ethical behavior (i.e. servant, spiritual, and authentic leadership). Servant leadership is a particularly popular style. While it originated in religious leadership, it can be applied outside of that context as long as it involves working for equality and social justice. This style involves 'serving' the follower by helping them to develop and empowering them. By serving their followers, leaders with this style hope to improve their followers' well-being. Using this style effectively results in followers who are trusting and loyal.

Spiritual leadership is a style similar to servant leadership in that the leader tries to find ways to improve circumstances for followers. Spiritual leadership, though, addresses two specific needs: transcendence and fellowship. If a follower achieves transcendence, they find that their work has value that goes beyond their own personal benefits. In other words, their work achieves a greater good. A follower who has fellowship finds joyful and meaningful relationships as a result of their work. Authentic leadership is another style that has gained popularity. A leader whose behaviors are consistent with their espoused values characterizes this style. The consistency between values and behaviors shows followers that the leader has personal integrity. The transparency inherent in this style also poses a risk for leaders whose followers do not share the same values.

Poor corporate management in the 21st century has called for a reassessment of leadership roles. Layoffs, psychological disengagement, and economic recession are among the many consequences that can be attributed to a crisis in ethical leadership. A

shift in leadership theory towards an ethical approach is crucial to eliminating uncontrolled greed, distrust, and other organizational problems. Change from the typical authoritarian style of leadership to a more benevolent one includes a focus on collaboration rather than competition. Current theories like transformational leadership have demonstrated progress in some areas of leadership research but further development into ethical sides of leadership is needed.

Benevolent leadership is defined as the process of creating a virtuous cycle of encouraging, initiating, and implementing positive change in organizations through: a) ethical decision making and moral actions, b) developing spiritual awareness and creating a sense of meaning, c) inspiring hope and fostering courage for positive action, and d) leaving a legacy and positive impact for the larger community.

Situational leadership is based on contingency theory and was developed by Paul Hersey in the 1960's and Ken Blanchard in the 1970's and 80's focusing on the aspect that there is no universal or best way to lead but rather that leaders have the ability to adapt to different situations. This style relies on expectations of maturity levels (M) within the group, which ultimately determines which situational leadership type (S) is used. Hersey and Blanchard each developed their own unique situational leadership model where Hersey's is the Situational Leadership Model and Blanchard's is the Situational Leadership Model II. Though both rely on the same basic principles, they decided in 1977 to work in separate organizations.

Each model describes the Four S's of situational leadership:

- S1 Telling: high directive behavior and low supportive behavior.
- S2 Selling: high directive behavior and high supportive behavior.

- S3 Delegating: low directive behavior and high supportive behavior.
- S4 Participating: low directive behavior and low supportive behavior.

Additionally, each model describes the Four M's of situational leadership:

- M1: Unable and insecure.
- M2: Unable but willing.
- M3: Capable but unwilling.
- M4: Very capable of and competent.

Diversity and a New Leadership Style

Contemporary researchers have been arguing for the need to reframe the leadership style debate. Eagly and Johnson (1980) conducted a meta-analysis of the research regarding gender differences in leadership styles. They examined the results of studies in three classes: organizational, laboratory, and assessment. In organizational studies, though gender stereotypes would suggest females would use a more interpersonally-oriented style and males would use a more task-oriented style, they found no gender differences. However, gender stereotypes did hold across all three classes of studies when considering the democratic versus autocratic leadership styles. Females were found to lead in, and have a preference for, a more democratic style while males preferred the autocratic style.

Recent census data predict that the population of the United States, in particular, will become a majority minority nation by the year 2050. Based on these data, and more, Chin and Trimble argue for the development of a new prototype for describing leadership styles. In their book, *Diversity and Leadership* (2015), they examined prior and current

research and conducted face-to-face interviews with members of a number of different world cultures. Through this process Chin and Trimble developed a list of 64 characteristics and behaviors thought to be associated with effective leadership. They then created a measure that asked participants to rate the extent to which they considered these characteristics and behaviors to be necessary or unnecessary for effective leadership. Their findings suggest that the individuals who completed the survey rejected those qualities associated with the alpha-male type leadership style. Across genders and cultures, participants tended to be more in favor of characteristics and behaviors associated with a more democratic, interpersonal style. Their ongoing research appears to support the need for new research leadership paradigms to accommodate diverse multicultural leadership styles.

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See also: Leadership, Organization, Personality

Biographies

Joshua Thompson (B.S., Washington State University, 2014) is a second year student in the M.S. program in Experimental Psychology at Western Washington University. He is the primary investigator for the newly formed WWU Political Psychology Lab. He has presented work completed with Joseph E. Trimble and Jean Lau Chin based on their book, *Diversity and Leadership*, at the Association for Psychological Science conference.

James R. Camp is a fourth year undergraduate student working towards a B.S. in psychology at Western Washington University. He currently works with Joseph E. Trimble on the research and development of leadership psychology with a focus on culture and politics.

Joseph E. Trimble, PhD is a Distinguished University Professor and Professor of Psychology at Western Washington University and a President's Professor at the Center for Alaska Native Health Research at the University of Alaska. He has over 150 publications on multicultural topics in psychology including 21 books. He received numerous excellence in teaching and research awards for his work in the field of multicultural psychology, including: the Janet E. Helms Award; Distinguished Elder Award; the Henry Tomes Award; the International Lifetime Achievement Award; the 2013 Francis J. Bonner, MD Award from the Massachusetts General Hospital; and the 2013 Elizabeth Hurlock Beckman Award.

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