THE CONCEPT OF LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to provide a systematic discussion of the concept of leadership. While leadership is a key instrument for progress in society, it is poorly understood as a concept. The methodology employed in this paper is analytical and discursive. Three major themes are addressed: the problematics, paradigms, and possibilities of leadership. The research is based on a limited survey of the voluminous leadership literature. The discussion is organized thematically. The principal table in the text provides a summary of leadership paradigms. The paper offers three sets of conclusions. First, leadership is a problematic because it lacks a clear and generally accepted definition; research has not elucidated the job of leader yet leadership is an arduous profession. Second, there are many leadership paradigms but no dominant one. Opinion is divided on the occurrence of paradigmatic shifts but there is consensus on the point that, empirically, leadership is a complex phenomenon. Third, leadership is a paragon for society. Ethics and morality govern the work of leaders. Effective leaders everywhere appear to practice ethical leadership. Despite numerous roles for leaders, there is no one best leadership prototype. Overall, despite extensive research and intensive debate, leadership remains enigmatic.

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INTRODUCTION

While leadership is a key invention of human society, it is a paradox of some importance that the concept itself is poorly understood. This paper will explore the concept of leadership systematically. The literature reflects a scholarly community that is divided, acrimonious and even confused about the true meaning of leadership. Exactly what is leadership? The purpose of this paper is to outline key facets of the concept of leadership. Three main themes will be addressed: the problematics, paradigms and possibilities of leadership. Our thesis is that the nature of the debate has prevented the development of any consensus concerning the essence of leadership. Conceptually, leadership is a problematic.

PROBLEMATICS OF LEADERSHIP

As a subject of investigation, leadership is problematical because of the controversy, mystery, romance and challenges inherent in the phenomenon per se. For purposes of analysis and discussion, the problematics of leadership include the polemics around a definition of leadership, the mystery and romance enveloping the subject, and the challenges inherent in the job of leader. Our exploration begins with a review of attempts to define the phenomenon of leadership.

Defining Leadership

Defining leadership is a polemical labour. Scholars, collectively, have transformed the definition of leadership into a cottage industry. Generally speaking, the controversy can be reduced to two opposing schools of leadership. The first school argues that leadership can be defined. The second holds that leadership has not been adequately defined, and there are good reasons for abandoning the attempt. These views are antithetical to each other. An expose of the competing claims is instructive.

The first school of leadership scholars holds that leadership can be defined, if not precisely, then adequately. Upon reviewing the literature, one senses that this group is very large. However, with further scrutiny, it is possible to agree with Chemers and Ayman (1993): "There are as many definitions of leadership as there are theorists" (p. 293). Our purposes will be served by reference to a sample of five.

Sarros (1992) argued that the classic definition of leadership was provided by Yukl (1989): generally, leadership consists of "...influencing task objectives and strategies, influencing commitment and compliance in task behavior to achieve these objectives, influencing group maintenance and identification, and influencing the culture of an organization"(p. 253). In short, a leader is an influencer. The objects of that influence are varied: task, strategy, commitment, compliance, group and organizational culture. Leaders can influence almost anything in the work environment.

Two things may be said about this definition. First, it derives from researchers, as opposed to practitioners, of leadership. Second, Yukl (1989) included a caveat: "Researchers usually define leadership according to their individual perspective and the aspect of the phenomenon of most interest to them" (p. 252). Caveat notwithstanding, Yukl's (1989) views of leadership are subscribed to by many other scholars (e.g. Chemers & Ayman, 1993; Greenwood, 1996; Bresnen, 1998). The only tangible addition to the concept of the leader as an influencer is a concern for the process through which that influence is applied (cf. Chemers & Ayman, 1993, p. 293 with Greenwood, 1996, p. 4 and Bresnen, 1998, p. 1). While there is considerable support for viewing leadership in terms of influence, the polemical nature of the subject includes dissenting voices.

Barker (1996) challenged the idea of influence as the defining characteristic of leadership: "Is leadership all about an ability to get things done, or about a process through which social relationships are developed?" (p. 38). Barker provided two different definitions of leadership. The first definition was concerned with the politics of leadership. For Barker (1996), "...leadership is a dynamic political relationship that is based in a

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mutual development of purposes which may never be realized" (p. 43). With reference to Yukl's (1989) view of the leader as a mobilizer of influence, it is difficult to see any great difference with Barker's notion of the leader as a political actor. Reverting to speculation, perhaps Barker viewed influence, or the political process, as a more egalitarian bi-directional relationship whereby leader and follower influence each other.

Barker's second idea was that "...leadership can be defined as a process of change where the ethics of individuals are integrated into the mores of a community..." (1996, p. 46). There are some new ideas here; leadership is a process, it trades in change and operates in an ethical and moral context. Nevertheless, it would be difficult, in this regime, to eschew either politics or influence. So, at the end of the day, Yukl and Barker do not appear to be that far apart. However, other voices are more discordant.

Bryman (1998), for example, views the leader as a motivator and argues that "...fundamentally leadership is about motivating people to do things they would not otherwise do by eliciting their commitment to a cause, to a leader, to an organization or to any combination of these" (p. 1). This is a fundamentally different idea of leadership. While influence and motivation are not totally unrelated, influence is applied externally between leader and follower but motivation is something the leader induces internally within the follower.

The literature makes it possible to continue with polemical leadership definitions ad infinitum. Perhaps, ad interim, a less polemical definition of leadership would be more useful. Vecchio, Hearn and Southey (1996) provide a textbook definition of leadership: "Leadership can be defined as a process through which a person tries to get organizational members to do something which that person desires" (p. 467). Superficially innocuous perhaps, but this definition of leadership may be capable of integrating all the previous views. Herein, the leader could employ influence or motivation, in a political process or relationship, to complete a task or affect a change.

The second group of leadership scholars assert that leadership has not been defined adequately at all. Some of them prefer that the concept of leadership not be precisely defined. Surprisingly, some of the views espoused by this group come from members of the first school – those who have attempted to clarify the meaning of leadership. For example, Yukl (1989) argued that "it is neither feasible nor desirable at this point in the development of the discipline to attempt to resolve the controversy over the appropriate definition of leadership" (p. 253). However, other scholars have added their voices to a lament for the equivocality of leadership.

Rost (1993) offered a stark insight into the status of leadership studies: "The reality is that, as of 1990, scholars and practitioners do not know, with certainty, what leadership is" (p. 16). Burns (1996, p. 149) also noted the lack of agreement on a common definition of leadership. Baruch (1998, p. 102) reflected on the absence of a generally accepted definition of leadership in the literature. There appears to be some consensus on the point that leadership lacks a clear and generally acceptable definition. It is also true that some scholars are troubled by the absence of a definitive statement on the meaning of leadership. Rost (1993, p. 8) argued that "a clear definition of leadership is crucial to leaders and followers making a difference in organizations and societies in the twenty-first century". A paradox exists; while human beings have long experienced leadership, they have equally longed for a definition of it.

It would be erroneous to suggest that all scholars are unhappy with the lack of definitional clarity on leadership. Bernard Bass remarked on the futility of defining leadership:

> The search for the one and only proper and true definition of leadership seems to be fruitless, since the appropriate choice of definition should depend on the methodological and substantive aspects of leadership in which one is interested (1995a, p. 11).

Opinion, therefore, on the value and priority that should be attached to clearly defining leadership is divided among the scholarly community. While armadas of scholars exhibit statements defining the concept of leadership, fleets of their colleagues appear satisfied to leave the term cloaked in ambiguity. Concomitant polemical warfare has contributed much to the mystery and romance of leadership.

The Mystery and Romance of Leadership

The conceptual ambiguity of leadership provides fertile ground for nurturing the mystery and romance of the subject. "Mystery" connotes secrecy, obscurity and harbors the unknown. "Romance" is a quintessentially positive commodity in the human experience. Leadership, when veiled in mystery and robed in romance, remains enigmatic to scholars and practitioners. It may be instructive to peer beneath the veil of mystery surrounding the idea of leadership.

The Mystery of Leadership

Leadership speaks to the uniqueness of certain people. Simply put, leaders are special people. Kirkpatrick & Locke (1991, p. 49) argued that "...successful leaders are not like other people...there are certain core traits which significantly contribute to business leaders success". Cawthon (1996, p. 3) compliments this view with the observation that "...it seems obvious that leaders are 'born' different from their followers. It is not simply a matter of 'learning' to lead". But what makes leaders different from the rest of us? Why are they so unique? These are perennial questions; in fact, they are the essence of the problematic of leadership.

A solution to this mystery would require clarification of our conceptualization of leadership. It would require a great deal more clarity than has been available. In fact, what has been available is an absence of clarity concerning the essence of leadership. Academic research has not been able to adequately define the concept of leader nor has it provided an explanation for how leaders are successful in their jobs (Sarros, 1992; Schutz, 1994). Leadership appears shrouded by a mysterious fog that prevents a clear understanding by academics and practitioners alike.

That leadership remains such a mystery to investigators lends it an ethereal quality. This state of affairs prolongs the confusion over the true meaning of leadership (Borwick, 1995, p. 114). To make things even more difficult, it now appears that leadership is a variable, rather than a constant. That is, people's perception of leadership varies according to their relationship with the leader (Bresnen, 1998). For example, in an organization, people may view the leader differently according to their position and experience in the hierarchy (Bresnen, 1998, p. 4).

So, leadership remains something of a mystery. Leaders are different, even unique, from their followers. Research has not solved the mystery. Leadership is an experiential phenomenon, not unlike the sense of taste, different across a sample of perceivers. The interesting thing is that, despite the negativity associated with not fully understanding the nature of leadership, people have conspired to romanticize it.

The Romance of Leadership

Many observers view leadership as a rendezvous with fortuna. Great leaders alter history and change the course of destiny (Bailey, 1994). Romantics everywhere view leadership as an affair of the heart rather than a calculus of the mind: "At its essence, leadership is relational, emotional, passionate" (Bolman & Deal, 1996, p. 532). Leaders must possess special qualities to establish their places in history. Perhaps the chief pre-requisite is a keen sense of self-awareness (Kramer, 1995). The romantic vision of leadership is fully reconciled with the proposition that special people may become gifted leaders who do great things.

True romantics accede to the idea that leaders can be heroic. Real heroes have a very special inner quality.

> True heroes are invasive: they get past our minds and wriggle into our hearts, and the heart is not logical... and we need them, these genuine heroes. We can look up to them. We can pretend that, if the circumstances arose, we could be like them..." (Carlyon, 1998, p. 12).

While the heroic aspects of leadership fit into the romantic paradigm, we do not presently live in such an age. In fact, some argue that we are in an age of the anti-hero (Carlyon, 1998, p. 3). Peter Senge, for example, has argued that "...we will finally have to surrender the myth of leaders as isolated heroes commanding their organizations from on high" (Drucker et al, 1997, p. 32). Not even the romantic view of leadership escapes the polemics of the discipline.

Nevertheless, the romantics offer several insights relevant to the concept of leadership. Leadership implies a special relationship with history, fate or fortuna. People seem to need heroes. Most followers like their leaders to be heroic in some proportion. Followers are demanding of their leaders, so leaders must measure up, or at least appear to be different, special, hopefully unique among their peers. All of these things are necessary because, in the main, leadership is a terribly challenging profession.

The Challenges of Leadership

Being a leader is not an ordinary job. The imperatives of leadership are numerous and complex. The pre-requisite to becoming a leader is an ability to confront oneself and overcome any personal adversity imposed by inheritance or misfortune. Upon mastery of these personal legacies, leaders must overcome any number of functional and moral challenges dictated by their environment. First of all, aspiring leaders should be cognizant of the imperatives of leadership.

Leadership is an arduous profession. Successful leaders must be capable people since leadership is both an art and a science (Yammarino, 1996, p. 74). Leaders can rarely meet the challenges confronting them alone. Most successful leaders benefited from training under exemplary mentors (Zaleznik, 1992). Leadership is different from management and leaders must possess appropriate motivation, cognitive skills and operational styles (Zaleznik, 1992, p. 127). For example, leaders must be comfortable with, and able to use power (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991). They must have extra-ordinary inter-personal skills, capable of being "...open with their followers, but also discreet..." (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1991, p. 53). Leaders must possess exceptional levels of integrity. The acquisition of these leadership attributes requires great personal dedication and fortitude.

Learning to be a leader entails an apprenticeship of unspecified content and unknown duration. Therefore, embarking on a leadership career is a risky undertaking. Fortunately, leaders "...are often temperamentally disposed to seek out risk and danger, especially where the chance of opportunity and reward appears promising" (Zaleznik, 1992, p. 129). Apparently, the personalities of many leaders are marked by a deep need to compensate for personal and emotional deficiencies inherent in their past (Rejai & Phillips, 1998, p. 71). In a study of key leadership attributes and experiences of military and political leaders, Rejai & Phillips (1998, p. 69) discovered that the key motivators were family influence, natural crisis, birthplace and fortuitous events. While it would be difficult to train people to meet these exigencies, overcoming these personal challenges is the price of admission for a leadership career.

In situ, professional leaders must address functional or practical challenges on a daily basis. Overcoming challenges and achieving difficult goals requires an ability to acquire and maintain a steady focus of purpose (Parry & Horton, 1998). The range of challenge depends entirely on the kind of leader and type of organization or institution. The challenges of the business world seem insignificant when compared with the threats of violence, famine, malaise and environmental crisis facing political leaders (Bolman & Deal, 1994, p. 312). Leadership has been characterized as a profession with no easy answers (Heifetz, 1994).

In addition to resolving practical problems, leaders are confronted with a vast array of moral dilemmas. Leaders, at every level and in every organizational setting, must ultimately address the challenge of mediating the human experience. They must be involved with governing the conduct of human beings, imparting meaning in an age where values seem to change at cyber speed, assign appropriate priorities to entirely new activities and, ultimately shape the aspirations of society (Klagge, 1995, p. 25). Leaders are society's chief meaning makers (Conger, 1991).

Leadership, as a profession, trades in challenges. Leaders must be habitual masters of challenge. They must thrive on problems. Leadership is an incredibly difficult job.

PARADIGMS OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership paradigms is the second theme in the discussion of the concept of leadership. While a paradigm is generally a typical pattern or example of things, we employ the term to signify a discreet view or model of

leadership phenomena. Thinking of leadership in terms of paradigms makes it easier to de-construct, classify and discuss various ideas about leadership. Below, we analyze leadership in terms of its scope and nature. 'Scope' refers to the range of leadership paradigms. 'Nature' refers to the properties of those same frameworks. Together, the vantage points of scope and nature allows us to visualize the broader panorama of leadership. We may be able to see leadership as a series of unique patterns, each paradigm reflecting a particular viewpoint of what leadership is all about.

The Scope of Leadership

The range of ideas about leadership is extensive by any standard. We propose to explore the scope of leadership thinking by looking at the idea of leadership paradigms and enumerating the type of paradigms that are discussed in the literature. We will also consider the proposition that paradigms shift over time and acknowledge some of the problematics associated with leadership paradigms.

Every era assumes that it is the center of an intellectual universe. The ideas characteristic of each era are orthodox. While new ideas are initially un-orthodox, even the orthodox ideas are composites of earlier and current thought. This universal applies to leadership paradigms. For example, Barker (1996, p. 38) argued that the existing leadership paradigm is anchored in feudal concepts of governance and social organization. An even more dramatic idea is that we should consider the merits of leadership from a Taoist perspective: "Central to the Taoist approach to leadership is the notion of wu wei or positive inaction" (Johnson, 1997, p. 86).

Finley (1994) has suggested that each paradigm has boundaries or defining characteristics. More fundamentally, Rost (1993, pp.58-59) argued that four conditions were necessary for leadership to occur:

1. There must be an influence relationship.
2. Leaders and followers must form this relationship.
3. Both parties must intend to make changes.
4. Leaders and followers develop mutual purposes.

Leadership, according to Rost's paradigmatic criteria, does not exist if these conditions are not met. Ironically, while every era both strives to, and assumes to have found a dominant idea of leadership, the reality is more akin to warfare between the dominant and contending paradigms. Little appears to be known about the dynamics of paradigm formation or decomposition. We do know, however, that there are many types of leadership paradigms.

Table 1: Exemplars Of Leadership Paradigms

TYPE	PROPONENT	HISTORICAL PERIOD
Transactional	Bass	1990, 1997
Transformational	Bass	1990, 1997
Charismatic	Bass	1990
Post-Modern	Kuhnert	1993
	Rost	1993
Relational	Borwick	1995
Taoist	Johnson	1997
Strategic	Maghroori & Rolland	1997
Political	Rejai & Phillips	1998
Military	Rejai & Phillips	1998

It is possible to chart the emergence of leadership paradigms chronologically. A cursory review of the literature provided nine leadership paradigms. For convenience of illustration, these exemplars of leadership paradigms are summarized in Table 1. This information is not exhaustive nor does it necessarily credit the originator of each paradigm. Its purpose is to merely illustrate the wide range of leadership paradigms extant in the literature. The point is that, at least in the last decade, there is no truly dominant paradigm of leadership. There are only many claims of a dominant leadership paradigm.

To make matters even more confusing, leadership paradigms were previously assumed to be dominant and stable. Yet, we have learned that there is no dominant paradigm. There are good reasons for challenging the assumption that leadership is a stable phenomenon in the first place.

The literature records numerous incidents of shifts in leadership paradigms. As far back as 1990, Selzer & Bass argued that "...transformational leadership augments transactional leadership..." (p. 701). Was this "augmentation" a de facto paradigm shift? Kuhnert (1993) insisted that post modern leadership theory and research must be different from its modernist precursors. Kuhnert argued that "...postmodern leadership theory must look beyond the organizational chart and strive to identify and study leaders, regardless of the position they hold" (1993, p. 195). This exhortation is actually a recommendation that existing leadership paradigms be replaced.

Ponce (1995, p. 73) recommended a similar paradigm shift, arguing that leadership should be based on a relationship rather than viewed as an authority figure. While Barker (1996, pp. 39-46) is certain that a new leadership paradigm is emerging, he believes the foci ought to be on political and change processes. Finally, Heifetz & Laurie (1997) insist that leadership in today's adaptive environments is different from the leadership existant in status quo type environments. In this paradigm, the ambit of leadership is restricted because followers play a greater role in shaping organizational destiny. To summarize, a majority of the previous commentators believed that some sort of paradigm shift had occurred. A minority argued that one should take place. Each author presented a different interpretation of the leadership paradigm involved.

There appear to be two problematics associated with leadership paradigms. The first problematic is empirical; there is little consensus around the type of leadership paradigms in operation. The second problematic is cultural; most of the leadership literature is based upon Western thought and discourse with little, if any, input from other cultural experiences: "Viewing leadership solely from a Western cultural perspective not only encourages us to think that our ideas about leadership are superior...but also prevents us from learning new and better ways to lead" (Johnson, 1997, p. 83). Since organizations everywhere are acutely affected by the dynamics of globalization, it is only reasonable that leadership studies be broadened to reflect cultural perspectives of a similar global nature. There may be a need for contemporary leadership paradigms to reflect a cosmopolitan world order. The scope of leadership thinking should compliment the diversity and complexity of contemporary organizational reality.

The previous section has reviewed the scope of leadership in terms of paradigms. We have discussed the ideas, types, shifts in, and problematics of leadership paradigms. It is now appropriate to look beyond the range of leadership ideas to explore the depth or nature of leadership thinking.

The Nature of Leadership

The literature suggests that leadership is demarcated by at least five boundary markers. Many commentators enumerate specific properties of leadership. There may be special keys to understanding leadership success. Effective leaders require specific skill sets. Culture appears to shape the nature of leadership. Leadership is predominantly a relationship process. These particular themes pervade the literature and provide a wealth of theories to explain the phenomenon of leadership. Closer inspection will be most interesting.

Over the years, leadership specialists have attempted to enumerate the unique properties of leadership. Kotter (1990, p. 107) suggested that they key attributes of leadership were intelligence, drive, mental health and integrity. Kirpatrick & Locke (1991) argued that leadership traits were important, especially the factors of motivation, including a desire to influence and a thirst for power. Toney (1994, p. 76) believed that the traits of intelligence and honesty were prime indicators of leadership competence and predictors of success.

Not all properties of leadership are positive; Hurst (1996, p. 124) thought that leadership was still bound up in notions of rank and status.

A rather comprehensive list of leadership properties was developed by Bass (1995a). In total, twelve dimensions of leadership were identified (Bass, 1995a, pp. 6-11): group processes, personality, inducing compliance, influence, behaviour set, persuasion, power relationship, goal achievement, interaction, differentiated role, initiator of structure, and an omnibus factor labeled "combination of elements". While Bass successfully codified twelve apostles of leadership, his example has been replicated by others.

In a 1997 study in Australia, Denston and Sarros confirmed Bass's four original factors for transformational leadership: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation. They also generated 11 new properties for transformational leadership (Denston & Sarros, 1997, p. 6): emotional intelligence, confidence in followers, self-determination, management of meaning, action orientation, delegation, mentoring, specific needs, alertness to problems, generation of solutions, and diagnosis. Empirical research is confirming that leadership is a very complex phenomenon.

It is important to note, however, that not all commentators view leadership as a vast network of factors. Field (1998, p. 2) argued that the essence of leadership is found in "...the thoughts, actions and feelings of the followers...[and] it is important that leaders...influence their hearts and minds". In a similar fashion, Conger & Kanungo (1998, p. 8) insisted that there were but three key characteristics of leadership:

1. Challenging the status quo,
2. Developing creative visions for the future, and
3. Promoting desired changes in values, attitudes and behaviour by employing empowering strategies and tactics.

The essential properties of leadership range from simple to complex depending upon the perspective of the commentator.

However, generating a taxonomy of leadership factors is not the same as explaining the key to success as a leader. It is likely that practitioners of leadership owe their success to a finite reservoir of personal faculties. Conger (1991, p. 43) argued that the language employed by leaders determined the success of the leader. Perception is the foundation of leadership according to Chemers & Ayman (1993, p. 324). Toney (1994, p. 76) offered a more fundamental insight: "Honesty is essential to leadership. Effective leaders are credible, with excellent reputations, and high levels of integrity". Carlopio (1994, p. 304) credited insight as the key to true leadership. Intellect, according to Capozzoli (1995, p. 20) is the essential faculty of leadership: "Leaders function in the higher cognitive domain of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation". All of these keys to successful leadership are intrinsic faculties yet every commentator defined leadership in terms of different critical success factors. The literature implies that successful leaders should possess a goodly number of personal attributes.

If it seems that successful leaders are endowed with formidable personal faculties, it also seems likely that leaders need to develop specific skill sets if they are to be successful in today's highly competitive environment. Toney (1994, p. 76) suggested that essential leadership skills were analytics, judgment and strategic thinking. Heifetz & Laurie (1997, pp. 133-134) implied that leaders must be good learners since leadership is a learning process. For Conger & Kanungo (1998, p. 52), leaders must be skilled at detecting deficiencies in systems. Unfortunately, few commentators focus their work on the skills necessary for leaders to succeed in contemporary organizations.

The majority of leaders operate in an organizational setting. Increasingly, business leaders also function in a global context. Leadership of global enterprises requires an appreciation for, and skills in, cultural dynamics. Leadership effectiveness is both culturally specific and culturally determined (Chemers & Ayman , 1993, p. 310). While leadership may be explicit within a culture, the meaning of leadership may differ across cultures (Counts et al, 1995, p. 84). The cultural dynamics inherent in the concept of leadership create enormous challenges for executives who operate inter-culturally, across national cultures and globally. Recent research appears to support these comments. For example, Bass (1997, p. 136) discovered that, while

certain leadership concepts transfer across cultures, specific leadership behaviours differ across the same cultures. Business leaders may well profit from cross-cultural leadership training.

Leaders are also confronted by the dynamics of change within familiar cultural contexts. The focus of leadership may be shifting from the leader per se to the relationships maintained by the leader and others (Ponce, 1995, p. 69). If this shift is typical, leaders may require skills in relationship management. Reliance on rank and authority may prove fatal for leaders in the future. Leadership today is vastly more complex than it was in the past. Barker (1996, p. 43) observed that leadership is a manifestation of social, political and cultural relationships. What is not clear is what mechanisms or processes are in place to help leaders cope with all of these challenges and complexities.

To summarize, the nature of leadership is highly complex. There are many properties comprising leadership. The keys to leadership success are not clearly understood at all. The skills required by leaders are numerous and influenced by cultural factors as well as the pace of change in contemporary institutions and societies. Paradoxically, people crave for constants in their lives and some would prefer reversion to the relative simplicity of the past. There are numerous moral imperatives to leadership.

PARAGONS OF LEADERSHIP

The paragons of leadership is the final theme in the discussion on the concept of leadership. A paragon is defined as a model of excellence. Since the profession of leadership requires leaders to serve as role models for followers, it seems appropriate to refer to certain aspects of leadership in terms of paragons. If leadership is a paragon of human behaviour, then ethics and morality will be important components of the model. The other component of a paragon is the normative aspects of roles that leaders are required to play.

It is important to field several definitions before we discuss the scope of leadership ethics and morality. Ethics are specific sets of moral principles. They appear as rules of conduct. The idea of morality turns on a value judgment between what is good and bad, or right and wrong, in human relations. Morality implies a degree of conformity with abstract principles. There are numerous systems of morals operating in the world today. We would classify ethics as an empirical phenomenon while morality is essentially a normative question. In any event, these concepts are closely related: "Ethics means integrity, morality, and principles" (Koestenbaum, 1991, p. 91).

Ethics and Morality in Leadership

For purposes of analysis, five issues are reviewed under the rubric of leadership ethics and morality: first, the role of ethics in leadership; second, ethical leadership; third, the role of morality in leadership; fourth, the idea of leadership effectiveness; and fifth, the application of ethics and morality in the enterprise of leadership.

An appreciation of ethics is a cardinal pre-requisite for professional leaders: "Leadership cannot take place separate from a commitment to ethical behavior and action" (Fairholm, 1994, p. 200). A host of cultural factors are determinants of a leader's ethical values: peer relations, community morality, traditional organizational practice, financial policy, and organizational policy (Fairholm, 1994, p 108). These factors remind us that leaders operate in a practical world. While the ethics of the larger community circumscribe those of their leaders, the ethics of the leader impacts the community (Fairholm, 1994). Ethics serve another practical purpose; they are the basis of decision making (O'Neil, 1997). While ethics are often valued in leaders, they appear to be in short supply. For example, in a study of European managers, 76% endorsed the principle of high ethical standards for corporate leaders yet only 53% of the same sample believed that their own CEO was an ethical leader (Syrett & Hogg, 1992, p. 240).

Paradoxically, ethical leadership is a universal goal: "An unfailing mark of ethical leaders is their attitude toward promises. Credible leaders remember their promises, keep them, and expect the same of others" (Koestenbaum, 1991, p. 91). The hallmark of the leader's ethics become the imprimatur of the organizations's ethics (Syrett & Hogg, 1992). If a leader is corrupt, the organization that employs him or her

will not be a paragon of virtue. Ethical leadership requires that the leader both enunciate, and abide by, core values and standards acceptable to both the institution and society (Fairholm, 1994). Yet selecting ethical standards is not an easy job: "Ethical leadership is a task of setting and enforcing one ethical standard as opposed to all others, some of which may be very good" (Fairholm, 1994, p. 107). Successful leaders must be capable of rendering ethical judgments.

The fact that leaders are required to make decisions means that morality will pervade leadership work. Ironically, it is impossible to always make the correct decision nor can all those that are affected by a decision be satisfied. Morality is a variable. What is right to one person is wrong to another. How can leaders cope with this paradox? Trust may help. Followers must be able to trust their leaders to apply the best possible moral values to each decision. Naturally, "trust suffers when core moral values are ignored" (Fairholm, 1994, p. 139). Since leaders are also mortal, "...one of the biggest obstacles to enduring success is a leader's moral lapses" (O'Neal, 1997, p. 69). Successful leaders may employ specific strategies to improve their personal effectiveness.

In the long run, effective leaders appear to be the most successful leaders. Effective leaders practice ethical leadership in their organizations (Fairholm, 1994). In fact, a lack of morals induces leadership failure: "Leaders with lax or nonexistent morals almost always self-destruct and lose their effectiveness..." (O'Neal, 1997, p. 69). While it is unclear just how leaders can maintain consistently high levels of ethical and moral behaviour, research has suggested that effective leaders have typically developed high levels of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1998, p. 94). Leadership work demands emotional maturity (Goleman, 1998, p. 102).

Ethics and morality are more than topics for the lecture hall. They are central to the profession of leadership. The quality of ethics is relative. "Ethical behavior is that behavior group members accept as right and good" (Fairholm, 1994, p. 108). Inappropriate ethics leads to leadership failure: "Most failures of leadership ...are usually failures of character: a lack of resistance to the inner enemies that constantly seek to undermine us" (O'Neal, 1997, p. 35). Leaders are in the business of executing profound changes which have significant impacts on personal ethics and organizational morals (Barker, 1996). All forms and types of leadership are affected by ethics and morality (Bass, 1999). Ethics and morals have been relevant throughout the history of leadership. A leader's personal ethics will correlate with his or her sense of destiny (Koestenbaum, 1991, p. 166).

To sum up, ethics plays a crucial role in leadership. Ethical leadership is an ideal type and one cherished within democratic traditions. Morality governs the actions of leaders. Effective leaders devise strategies for employing acceptable ethical and moral values. The ability to operate at an ethical and moral level is a determinant of leadership success and failure. Leadership operates within a universe of followers' expectations. The roles leaders play are shaped by both the expectations of followers as well as those embraced by the leader.

Roles Leaders May Play

The roles that leaders may play are infinite. The purpose of this section is to compare and contrast the types of roles that leaders often play. In the literature, one finds deterministic views of leadership roles. One also encounters avant-garde ideas about leadership roles. The former view is typically conservative, the latter essentially progressive.

According to the deterministic school, the actions of leaders are circumscribed by a variety of factors. Chemers & Ayman (1993, p. 297) argued that effective leaders lead according to the expectations of their followers. Bailey (1994, p. 33) concluded that the environment demands specific kinds of leaders who, once selected, forever alter that environment. In this school, environmental determinism is important. Leaders and followers are locked into a relationship marked by the force of history, generally, and environmental necessity, specifically. According to Mintzberg's (1998) logic of managerial work, leadership roles are a function of interpersonal roles which, in turn, are a part of a larger taxonomy of managerial roles. Leaders are actually managers who perform leadership functions when necessary. The "deterministic" school allows only moderate scope for leadership initiative.

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In stark contrast, the "avant-garde" school of leadership posits more dramatic opportunities for practitioners of leadership. Collaborative leadership, whereby leaders and followers share power and responsibility, is not only a plausible but preferable possibility (Hurst, 1996; Drucker et al, 1997). Buchen (1998) has endorsed Greenleaf's model of servant leadership. Servant leaders are focused on the future (Buchen, 1998, p. 131). Warren Bennis (1999) advocates a brave new order of leadership. Here, leaders are architects of feedback and champions of dissent and value proactive, opinionated followers. Apparently, avant-garde type of leaders desire to collaborate with followers, serve constituencies and promote the full development and integration of workers into decision making processes. Leadership roles may be changing and there is as yet, no one best leadership prototype (Greenwood, 1996).

SUMMARY

The paper addressed three major themes that are embedded in the literature. The first theme is that leadership is a problematic. This discussion was organized around three sub-themes. First, defining leadership is a polemical task. The literature accommodates two schools of thought concerning the definition of leadership: that it can, and cannot, be defined. Second, leadership is both mystery and romance. Leadership has emotional as well as functional properties. Third, leadership is a challenging profession. Successful leaders must overcome adversity, solve problems and satisfy disparate human needs.

The second theme concerns the paradigms of leadership. In terms of scope, the range of ideas about leadership is extensive. Nine types of leadership paradigms were identified. In terms of nature, leadership is a complex web of attributes, traits, properties and skill sets. There may be special keys to leadership success. Leaders must be dynamic individuals, capable of operating in diverse cultural settings and in situations where change is the norm rather than the exception. Leadership may be growing more complex as time goes by.

The third theme considers the paragons of leadership. Leaders must be conversant with the ethical and moral dimensions of leadership. Leaders can play a diverse range of roles in society and its organizations. Deterministic roles afford few opportunities for leaders to deviate from pre-determined norms and expectations. Avant-garde leadership roles facilitate significant experimentation with the job of leader.

CONCLUSION

Leadership has been the object of extensive research, and is the subject of intensive debate, among scholars and practitioners. The concept of leadership remains problematic for three reasons. First, it lacks a clear and generally accepted definition. Second, academic research has not been able to solve the mysteries nor dispel the romantic notions concerning leadership. Third, while we have learned that leadership is an arduous profession, we are less certain about what it takes to be a successful leader.

Leadership may be analyzed in terms of paradigms. While there are many leadership paradigms in existence, there is no single dominant one. In addition, these paradigms appear to change over time. Some commentators are divided over whether a paradigm shift in leadership has occurred in the last decade. Other writers prefer to proselytize for such a paradigmatic shift. Possibly the only consensus in the empirical literature is that leadership is a complex phenomenon.

Leadership can be a paragon to society. Ethical leadership is a universal goal. Morality pervades leadership work. Effective leaders appear to practice ethical forms of leadership. While leaders may perform a vast array of roles, there is no one best leadership prototype. When the incumbent of the office of leader possess the 'right stuff', magic happens. Unfortunately, research has not decoded the magic of leadership into a simple formula.

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