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CONTEMPORARY LEADERSHIP THEORIES

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The term *leadership*, by its very nature, is laden with meaning often derived from the interpreter's varied life history. For some, this represents an internalized identity, shared processes, or civic engagement grounded in experiences as social activists, with developmental mentors, or from positive group experiences. For others, the term may elicit a more negative interpretation associated with abuses of power, positionality, or an impersonal focus on end goals. These interpretations are often the effect of sociohistorical marginalization or negative encounters with those that inappropriately wielded influence. Both ends of this interpretive spectrum can also be found in the body of literature representing leadership theory. Contemporary theory, however, has attempted to reframe the term with a greater focus on moral discourse and social purpose, shifting away from previous theory that favored management, production, and authority.

This chapter will provide an overview of contemporary leadership theories, situating their emergence in the context of the broader evolution of leadership knowledge, and highlighting several prominent contemporary theories. Specific attention will be paid to how philosophical traditions of inquiry served as a catalyst for the emergence of contemporary theories and to defining characteristics across these theories. The chapter will end with a critique of contemporary leadership theory and with recommendations for future directions.

Setting the Context: Evolving Conceptualizations of Leadership

An exploration of contemporary leadership theory is best understood in the context of its theoretical evolution. This is in large part due to the enduring influences of past conceptualizations of leadership on contemporary practice and thinking both in academic and mainstream cultures. This section will present an abbreviated narrative of this evolution and highlight how emerging philosophical traditions of inquiry have shaped this advancement.

Theoretical Evolution

Early 20th-century perspectives on leadership typically reflected leader-centric approaches focusing on the leader as a positional authority. Largely examined in organizational or management contexts, these perspectives led to theories and research on how positional leaders accomplished goals in organizational settings, on what traits and styles were effective to achieve outcomes, and eventually on how the leader influenced others in the organization. These theories reflected prevailing social constructions of leadership that were associated with traditionally masculine, industrial, and structural approaches such as hierarchical relationships, achievement orientations, and leveraging of power. Families of leadership theory consistent with this

approach include great man theories and trait-based leadership models. This body of theory contributed to the creation of a heroic leader archetype further linking leadership to the individual and to the extraordinary.

Over time, leadership theories began to explore the topic from more of a production orientation, examining not only individuals as positional authorities, but also the role followers play in the leadership process. These theories still emphasized positional roles, but they acknowledged that outcome achievement was often dependent on the degree to which the leader could mobilize, motivate, and otherwise influence the commitment and productivity of followers. Thus, leadership became synonymous with effective management and influence of human resources. Leadership theories consistent with this interpretation include behavioral theories, contingency and situational theories, path-goal theory, and leader-member exchange theory (LMX).

Joseph C. Rost (1991) suggests that perhaps the most dramatic and noted shift in the evolution of leadership theory occurred in the late 1970s with the release of James MacGregor Burns's book *Leadership* (1978). This seminal work reconceptualized leadership as not only process oriented but also as necessarily focused on follower development. This reframing situated the end goal as equally important and as more easily achieved in a process that valued the development and empowerment of the follower. Although still leader centric in many ways, Burns's work opened the door for countless other theories that explored leadership from an alternative lens. Rost argued that this represented a paradigmatic shift in leadership theory, moving away from conventional or industrial perspectives and toward those characterized by collaborative process orientations, reciprocal relationships, and systems approaches in organizational work.

Philosophical Evolution

Adrianna J. Kezar, Rozana Carducci, and Melissa Contreras-McGavin (2006) asserted that evolving conceptualizations of leadership theory are derived largely from the epistemologies that influenced their generation. In other words, theory can reflect only the assumptions of knowledge that inform its creation. As such, major shifts in how leadership is understood often run parallel to changes in how knowledge is conceived. When used as an interpretive lens on the evolution of leadership theory, this provides critical insights not only into how and why thinking has advanced, but also into the continuing gaps in theoretical conceptualizations of the subject matter. Thus, awareness of epistemological traditions can be a powerful tool for understanding both conventional and contemporary leadership theory. These epistemological frames include positivism-functionalism, social constructivism, critical inquiry, and postmodernism.

Margaret J. Wheatley (1992) and Kathleen E. Allen and Cynthia Cherrey (2000) suggested that early theoretical

perspectives on leadership accompanied a fragmented and hierarchical view of organizations at a time when knowledge was perceived as finite, systems as closed, problem solving as linear, the top of organizations as all-knowing, and organizations themselves as controllable environments. These theories paralleled positivism, the prevailing epistemological tradition of knowledge at the time the theories were generated. Positivism assumes that universal truths exist, and that knowledge is finite so it can be objectively measured. These beliefs play out in theoretical conceptualizations that support a single, right way to lead or support cause-and-effect approaches to working with followers.

Conversely, naturalistic epistemological traditions such as constructivism, critical inquiry, and postmodernism as outlined by Egon Guba and Yvonne Lincoln (1994) suggest that knowledge is socially constructed, inherently subjective, complex and nonlinear, and influenced by social systems (e.g., economic, political). The use of these emergent epistemologies in leadership research and theory building contributed significantly to contemporary theories by allowing for the exploration of a more diverse range of perspectives, deconstructing essentialist notions of power and position, and examining nonhierarchical and nonlinear process orientations. Contemporary theories posited by Rost as reflecting the emergent or postindustrial leadership paradigm certainly reflect this perspective. Table 14.1 contrasts select elements of these conventional and contemporary views of leadership.

The examination of epistemological traditions informs the understanding of contemporary leadership theory and calls into question the extent to which a paradigm shift actually occurred in its evolution. Social constructivism, critical theory, postmodernism, and feminist theory have all played important roles in shaping contemporary leadership theory and are characterized by the degree to which they give voice to historically marginalized populations, capture the complexities of social interactions, and address power dynamics. These approaches to research and theory building revealed and validated the leadership perspectives long held by many women and those from collectivist cultures who have historically valued collaboration, interdependent relationships, community responsibility, and systemic views. The forms of leadership that these communities had been practicing were often labeled as social activism and dismissed as unsustainable and/or lacking in the organizational structure necessary for long-term outcome achievement. These perceptions reinforced industrial conceptions of leadership and, thus, normative structures characterized by power differentials. Who could be a leader was clear and often did not include women and people of color. It could be, then, that what is commonly referred to as a paradigm shift did not occur for those whose perspectives reflected industrial approaches to leadership and for the vast majority was simply a definitional shift that embraced their long held ways of being.

<i>Conventional View</i>	<i>Contemporary View</i>
Hierarchical orientation; siloed structures	Systems orientation; networks; webs; communities of learning
Closed systems	Open systems
Parts perspective	Whole perspective
Fragmented and isolated	Connected and interdependent
Leader role: authority, decider	Leader role: meaning maker, facilitator
Followers to be led	Followers as leaders themselves; valuing nonpositional leadership
Leader-led organization	Leader-full organization
Control	Shape
Power over	Power with, empowerment
Leadership as behavior of positional leader	Leadership as the process of the group
Personal vision	Shared vision
Efficiency and effectiveness	Socially just
Discussion	Dialogue
Permanent	Temporary
Share information	Create knowledge
Providers	Partners
Receiving	Reflecting
Goals and bottom line	Core values and vision
Self-protection	Trust
Balance	Disequilibrium-confusion
Linear causality	Adaptive solutions
Change initiated from top	Change initiated from anywhere
Incremental change	Dynamic flux
Either-or thinking	Both-and thinking

Table 14.1 Contrasting Leadership Paradigms

Source: Adapted from Allen & Cherrey, 2000; Komives, 2001; Komives, Lucas, & McMahon, 2007.

Consequently, reframing the paradigm shift in the evolution of leadership theory as one that occurred largely for those in dominant societal positions is critical. It allows for more accurate and appropriate attribution of sources of contemporary theory to traditionally marginalized communities that have often felt distanced from the term. The valuing of more inclusive leadership practices has widened the social construction of leadership and enriched the capacity of people in groups working together toward more effective outcomes. These views exist in dynamic reciprocity with the

changing views of organizations from closed, hierarchical entities to open, dynamic, rapidly changing, interconnected systems.

Contemporary Leadership Theory

Contemporary leadership theory is typically associated with the body of work emerging as part of what Rost called the *postindustrial paradigm*. Broadly, these theories reframed leadership as a dynamic and reciprocal process

between people pursuing a common goal. Much of this literature also situates leadership as inherently directed at improving the common good and grounded in social responsibility. This section will highlight the emergence of contemporary theory.

Pulitzer Prize–winning political scientist Burns is widely credited as the catalyst for contemporary leadership theory. Burns’s perspectives on transforming leadership presented in his 1978 book, *Leadership*, challenged conventional views by situating leadership as an ethical process that demanded a commitment to both modal and end values. Burns advocated that a key responsibility for any positional leader was to develop followers into leaders themselves, making it clear that organizations needed to be leader full, not just leader led. He advocated that each person, regardless of role, should be engaged in what was characterized as an inherently relational and collaborative process. Thanks in large part to this work, the conventional role of followers began to be reconstructed as that of collaborators, cocreators, constituents, and as central to the leadership process. A clear differentiation emerged between leader and leadership, with the term leader typically reflecting position or responsibility and leadership reflecting the collaborative process. His work provided a critical foundation for the development of future leadership theories incorporating complexity theory, chaos theory, and system perspectives.

Wheatley and Allen and Cherrey observed that these perspectives emerged at a time when organizations were beginning to be reframed as part of networked, open, integrated systems in which knowledge was infinite and rapidly changing, and organizations could be influenced, but not controlled. Chaos theory explained the patterning in these more complex times with such concepts as attractors, force fields, feedback loops, and self-organizing systems. Concurrently, more marginalized groups demanded pluralistic and inclusive practices, and even the most conventional organizations recognized the need to develop and use the diverse talents of its memberships. Allen and Cherrey further asserted that these new times required new ways of relating, new ways of changing, new ways of learning, and new ways of leading. Ronald Heifetz (1994) framed these conditions as contributing to complex, adaptive challenges that required an approach to leadership that went well beyond routinized or technical problem solving.

The result of the above is a contemporary scholarship that typically leans toward a conceptualization of leadership that is values based, complex, and directed at goal achievement related to the common good. This scholarship is also derived from a broader array of disciplines (e.g., business, social psychology, education, political science), although the degree to which theories have been adopted by and/or transferred between disciplines varies considerably. In addition, contemporary theory reflects a more diverse range of perspectives in its conceptualization,

drawing more heavily from grassroots movements and social activism as a complement to traditional political and market-based frames.

Exploring Key Contemporary Theories

A number of contemporary leadership theories have either been critical in the advancement of this line of thinking or offered unique contributions in a specific area. These theories emphasize the relational, collaborative nature of leadership. Several of these theories are reviewed in the following sections. This list is not meant to be exhaustive, nor can it capture the depth and complexity that these theories embody. Therefore, readers are encouraged to consult with source material for a full understanding of the content. This information is provided in the recommended readings located at the end of the chapter. In addition, readers will find resources elsewhere in this handbook on community-based leadership models and other contemporary political models that may be useful in understanding the full range of contemporary leadership theory.

Transforming Leadership

Burns’s work broadened the view of leadership as something beyond the behaviors of a positional leader to include processes among those engaged in accomplishing shared purposes. He also advocated a values-based approach to leadership. Beyond transactions that always occur between leaders and members of organizations, he advised leaders to develop their followers to be leaders themselves. Burns’s comfort with advancing values reframed leadership for many scholars as inherently acknowledging the authentic internal character of people engaging in trusting and honorable relationships toward positive, moral outcomes (e.g., liberty and justice). Burns’s complex work uses presidents and other positional leaders as examples, which paradoxically can be confusing to readers in relation to his message that everyone is to be brought into the leadership process and be thought of as leaders themselves.

Building on Burns’s notions of transforming and transactional leadership processes, Bernard Bass and colleagues (Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006) framed their research to explore what Bass termed *transformational leadership*, initially rejecting the ethical and moral component of Burns’s model. The inclusion of charisma as a transformational leader trait in Bass’s and Bruce Avolio’s work (1994) paralleled a resurgence in the concept of charismatic leadership by other scholars, though this was not intended by Burns. Bass and colleagues were seeking to identify the dynamic between the leader and individual followers that elevated followers to be leaders themselves, and initially charisma seemed to describe that dynamic. Avolio and his colleagues subsequently went on to further explore this dynamic and the moral character of leadership and identified authentic leadership as its underlying foundational structure.

Servant Leadership

Generated concurrently with Burns's work in the 1970s, AT&T executive Robert Greenleaf published a series of papers viewing the positional leader as the servant of ideas and the servant of enabling others in the organization to achieve desired outcomes. Compiled into a book by the late 1970s and challenging common notions of power wielding and authority in positional roles, Greenleaf (1977) sought to empower positional leaders to realize their greater impact through engaging and supporting others. His work widely engaged shifts in corporate settings toward more networked, team-oriented environments and was an affirmation to many women and others who conceived leadership as facilitative and as process oriented. It is somewhat unfortunate that the emergence of the community service movement led many to connect his work only to service or civic outcomes instead of his intentions around the changing imperative for the positional leader in corporate organizational and other settings. Although this work retains some of the leader-centric qualities present in Burns's work, the central question Greenleaf posed of whether those involved were better off for having worked together on their shared outcome is still critical to socially just leadership practices.

Relational, Collaborative, and Shared Leadership Theories

The emergence of followers from the shadows of the leadership conversation to centrality in the discussion led to valuing nonpositional leadership and viewing leadership as a process. These theories emphasize the importance of the reciprocal nature of relationships in which group and organization members are interdependent and value the trust and integrity needed to work within and between groups. Craig Pearce and Jay Conger's shared leadership and other scholarship on distributed leadership and teamwork illustrate the importance of interdependence and relational orientations. Susan R. Komives, Nance Lucas, and Timothy R. McMahon's (2007) relational leadership model emphasized the importance for individuals and groups to be purposeful, inclusive, empowering, ethical, and process oriented. The authors initially conceived it for use with college students, the authors advocated for leadership as an ethical and relational process of people working together for positive change. Viewing the group as a community, roles (both positional leaders and members) fluctuated, reflecting a shared leadership when working together toward outcomes. In these models, individuals in positional roles engage in facilitative, distributive leadership, diminishing power differentials to build collegial systems.

The Social Change Model of Leadership Development

In the mid-1990s, Alexander and Helen Astin and an ensemble of leadership educators and scholars integrated

findings from women's leadership studies, perspectives on social identities, knowledge of how leadership is developed, and content from the growing literature on civic engagement, service, and socially just processes and outcomes to develop a values-based leadership model, the social change model of leadership development (SCM). This holistic model is the most widely used with college student leadership programs advocating for socially responsible leadership in any context. The SCM approaches leadership as a purposeful, collaborative, values-based process that results in positive social change. This model presents three sets of values perspectives in individual, group, and societal-community clusters. The individual values are consciousness of self, congruence, and commitment. The group values are common purpose, collaboration, and controversy with civility. The societal-community value is citizenship. As presented in Figure 14.1, all values dynamically interact to contribute toward both individuals' and groups' capacities to engage in social change.

This holistic model dynamically engages a values-based, multilevel approach to leadership. The individual values identify aspects of the self that are central to working in socially responsible ways for change. Consciousness of self values the mindfulness that comes from introspection and self-reflection. Congruence holds the self to high

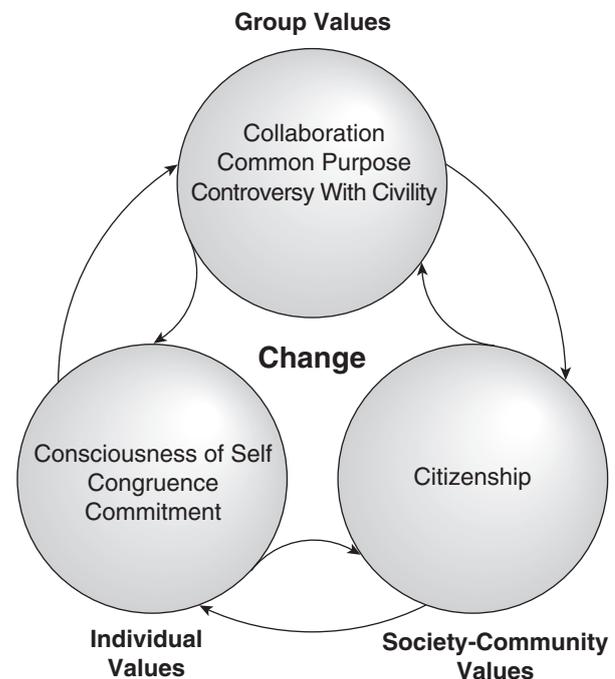


Figure 14.1 The Social Change Model of Leadership Development

Source: Adapted from *A Social Change Model of Leadership Development* (3rd ed., p. 20) by Higher Education Research Institute (HERI). Copyright © 1996, National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs. Reprinted with permission of the National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs.

standards to enact deeply held values and practice a consistency of alignment. Commitment identifies the importance of following through on one's passions and choosing to make a difference in all communities of practice. The group values identify important practices that are central to groups of diverse people working toward common goals. Common purpose signals the ability of the individuals in the group to agree on shared vision, on shared purposes, and to work together for change. Collaboration is valued as the most effective philosophy and practice of individuals and groups. Recognizing that this process is hard work, controversy with civility identifies the importance of thoughtful differences of opinion that enrich and propel a group's actions. The societal-community value of citizenship brings the frame of a heightened responsibility to improve our shared world acting as an active citizen in all one's communities of practice. The interaction of all seven values contributes to an individual or group's knowledge, skills, and beliefs related to socially responsible leadership.

Complexity Leadership

Building upon previous work by Heifetz, Wheatley, and other systemic, chaos, and adaptive leadership scholars, Mary Uhl-Bien and Russ Marion (2001) conceptualized an approach to leadership built upon complexity science. They defined leadership as much more than the actions of those in authority, as a complex dynamic resulting from the collective need for change that emerges from organizational interactions. The theory identifies three forms of leadership (i.e., administrative, enabling, and adaptive) that interact within the hierarchical, organizational systems in which individuals function. The goal of complexity leadership is to foster system-level adaptive outcomes such as increased innovation, learning, and creativity. Perhaps more than most theories, complexity leadership takes into account the context in which leadership occurs, suggesting that organizational structures and decision making must be adaptive and responsive and that influences on this are neither wholly individual nor systemic, but reflect complex interactions. This theory pushes the boundaries of thinking regarding the incredible complexity that emerges from organizational leadership and the degree to which systems and structures must foster environments that support adaptive thinking.

Authentic Leadership

Analyzing the emergence of collaborative, relational, and interactionist theories, Avolio and William L. Gardner (2005), and other scholars asserted that authenticity is the underlying foundation upon which leadership is often predicated. Michael H. Kernis (2003) described four core elements of authenticity: self-awareness, unbiased processing, relational authenticity, and authentic behavior or action.

This authenticity leads to what Avolio and Gardner referred to as an inclusive, ethical, caring, and strength-based organizational climate. Grounded in the positive psychology movement, identification of authenticity promotes trust and sustainability in the reciprocal relationships in groups and organizations. Authentic leadership suggests that leadership should be inherently focused on the development of follower capacity and on the constant and critical exploration of self on the part of the leader. Most scholars consider authentic leadership to be a root construct, suggesting that one can practice authentic approaches to other forms of leadership (e.g., authentic servant leadership, authentic adaptive leadership).

Reemergence of Trait and Behavioral Theories

As contemporary models evolved in tandem with an expanded study of personality theory, some scholars such as S. A. Kirkpatrick and Ed Locke (1991) revisited earlier conventional trait and behavioral theories to understand what characteristics, capacities, and behaviors were essential for one to be effective in this relational, process approach to leadership. Conventional traits such as intelligence, masculinity, and dominance were replaced by such contemporary traits as honesty, integrity, and self-confidence. Behavioral or leadership style research reemerged in the contemporary work of such scholars as James Kouzes and Barry Posner (2007) in *The Leadership Challenge*. The five practices derived from their research (i.e., model the way, inspire a shared vision, enable others to act, encourage the heart, and challenge the process) have been popular and provided an approachable model enabling individuals to see how they might be effective in the processes of leadership regardless of role. Contemporary trait and behavioral approaches to leadership are also visible in the GLOBE research project, a complex, large-scale research program conceived by Robert J. House, Paul J. Hanges, Mansour Javidan, Peter W. Dorfman, and Vipin Gupta (2004) examining cultural influences on leadership. The GLOBE study is comprised of quantitative and qualitative data collected in 62 societies used to examine the universality of leadership behaviors and attributes. Study results led to the development of six culturally endorsed implicit theories of leadership distinguishing between individuals' perceptions of effective and ineffective leaders. These theories largely offer a revised set of learnable skills and/or preferred behaviors related to leadership styles that are more consistent with contemporary leadership theory.

Reconceptualization of Industrial Theories

Just as trait and behavioral theories have been reconceptualized to reflect contemporary leadership theory, scholars have also attempted to adapt other industrial models to fit postindustrial perspectives. This is evident

in Peter Northouse's (2006) comprehensive review of leadership theory that highlights evolving research and theoretical perspectives across a wide range of theories. Situational and contingency, path-goal, and LMX theories all became incredibly ingrained in both the management ethos and empirical leadership research that attempts to adapt them to a contemporary worldview is not surprising. It is important to recognize, however, the degree to which the theories are retrofitted versus truly reconceptualized to reflect evolving understandings of leadership. Situational, contingency, and path-goal theories all originally reflected leader-centric perspectives with followers often being treated as a collective rather than as individuals with unique needs, follower dependence on the leader, and unwavering foci on productivity. Scholars have since attempted to shift these models to reflect a more relational focus, but the overarching importance of productivity does not seem to have wavered or been reinterpreted in the context of truly shared and transformational leadership. Terms such as follower development are now used, but largely reflect the same goal of altering supportive versus directive leader behaviors to increase follower productivity. LMX theory was among the first industrial models to suggest leadership reflected the process of interactions between leaders and followers, stressing the importance of didactic relationships. However, the theory also was originally predicated on defining and maintaining clear organizational in-groups and out-groups characterized by differential access, influence, and capital as perceived and reinforced by the leader. More contemporary research shifted LMX theory to explore the role of the leader in the leader-making process and thus expanding the in-group to incorporate as many organizational constituents as possible. This reinterpretation adds to the level of congruency with contemporary leadership theory, but belies the theory's very nature, which remains leader centric and predicated on power differentials within organizations.

Common Themes Across Contemporary Leadership Theories

Contemporary leadership theory, and particularly the emergent thinking of the past decade, is characterized by a number of critical themes. These themes represent common elements present across contemporary theories and theoretical dimensions that have not always been similarly conceptualized by authors. As such, they present tension points in which theorists acknowledge the relative value and importance of the concept, but they may offer alternative definitional parameters or place differential degrees of importance on the issue. It is also important to note that these themes are often interrelated with theoretical positioning of the issues reflecting the scholars' perspectives regarding their mutual influences.

Importance of Self-Awareness

Early postindustrial theories varied in the degree to which they positioned leader self-awareness as important. As contemporary theories have evolved, however, self-awareness has moved to a central and defining element in many theories (e.g., authentic leadership, social change model of leadership), suggesting that leadership itself is an inherently developmental process that necessitates self-awareness. Political and civic leadership in particular occur in a rapidly changing, dynamic, and complex social system in which an individual serves as part of a greater whole. Equally important, then, is the acknowledgment that socially constructed systems are typically characterized by differentiated social roles that impose varying degrees of privilege and repression on members. This demands a more complex form of self-awareness that authentic leadership suggests should be temporally and contextually bound. In other words, leadership requires the ability to understand self in present and possible future contexts as well as in relation to diverse others and their own self-awareness processes. This requires both complex cognitive skills and a capacity for critical self-reflection. Relational approaches to leadership support this claim as they situate leadership as a socially constructed and reciprocal process that constantly requires redefinition on the part of those involved. This would suggest that sustaining relational leadership processes requires constant comparative analysis of the self in the context of others.

Ethics, Moral Leadership, and Social Responsibility

Examinations of the roles ethics and morality play for leaders and in the leadership process have been a concern of scholars dating back to Plato. Early philosophical considerations of political and civic leadership debated the degree to which leaders did and/or should operate from ethical versus value-neutral perspectives. As Deborah Rhode (2006) notes in *Moral Leadership: The Theory and Practice of Power, Judgment, and Policy*, this debate is virtually omnipresent in the philosophical literature, yet relatively absent from empirical research and theory. Warren Bennis (2007) asserts that the omission of words such as *justice* and *common good* in leadership theory is a critical and problematic oversight potentially attributable to epistemological limitations felt by researchers. Nevertheless, the most contemporary of leadership theories have attempted to incorporate this terminology and move these concerns to the forefront. Servant leadership and authentic leadership both assert that leadership should be other directed and characterized by a positive moral perspective. Similarly, theories such as the social change model and relational leadership position social justice and ethics as not only critical aspects of leadership, but requisites of the process. Nearly all contemporary theories suggest or assert that leadership is tied to social responsibility. How they define this, though, and the degree of its emphasis in particular models represent points of departure.

Redistribution of Power and Shared Leadership

As postindustrial leadership theories relinquished assumptions regarding organizations as closed and hierarchical and adopted more systems-based perspectives, conceptions of power shifted as well. This is not to suggest that power and authority do not influence leadership, but that alternative forms of power and influence can be wielded in the process. Many contemporary theories acknowledge important new considerations for how authority is exercised in positional leadership roles. These typically involve varying degrees of acknowledgment of a partner-based approach between leaders and followers characterized by common goals. This redistribution of power is most evident in contemporary theories that differentiate between authority and influence with some going so far as to suggest that influence lies just as much in the collective (e.g., team, group) as it does with individual actors. Interdependence and acknowledgment of the complexity of leadership serve as critical dimensions to models that support shared approaches to leadership. Implications of redistributing power in the leadership process abound, ranging from increased inclusivity to diverse and alternative perspectives to growing comfort with ambiguous role assignment in leadership efforts.

The above themes represent central points of departure between conventional and contemporary leadership theories. They also provide a source for internal differentiation between and among contemporary theories. Individual models fall along a diverse continuum in terms of their conceptualization of these dimensions, offering varying degrees of clarity and congruence in their conceptualization and definition of key aspects from each thematic area.

Future Directions and Remaining Questions

The increasing complexity of contemporary political and civic leadership theory and the rapid rate at which it is being generated present a number of challenges. These challenges surface important questions not fully addressed by existing models as well as point to future directions for empirical research and theory building. Central among these are the need for greater definitional clarity in theoretical models, a more integrative approach to both theoretical structures and empirical testing, and increased attention to developmental considerations.

Definitional Clarity

As often cited, the number of theories related to leadership is vast and represents the diverse perspectives and frameworks from which researchers and theorists approach this important work. Despite that contemporary leadership theories often share common themes, there is a general lack of definitional clarity both within and between theories.

Some theories present elaborate characteristics of leadership or posit unique dimensions and values associated with it, yet never present a coherent definition of the construct itself. This is problematic as the underlying latent construct representing leadership becomes muddled and open to the interpretation of the reader. In addition, specific terminology can become problematic as definitional understanding is assumed or omitted entirely. Terms such as *ethics*, *values*, and *morals* are frequently shared without adequate explication and differentiation. This makes it nearly impossible for comparison across conceptual models let alone empirical validation. Finally, common terms reflected in contemporary leadership theories (e.g., common good, citizenship, collaboration) often lack philosophical or theoretical grounding. Who defines the common good? From what traditions are we arguing for just leadership? Understanding the traditions from which these concepts are derived not only enhances the clarity of theories but also provides the level of rigor necessary for theory testing.

Integrative Approaches

Contemporary political and civic leadership theories would benefit from a more complex and integrative approach in their construction both structurally and in terms of the disciplines from which they are derived. Structurally, many existing theories examine the agent or individuals in a leadership process but fail to capture the context in which leadership is occurring. More complex analytic methods have allowed for consideration of multiple levels of analysis in empirical leadership research. This, however, should be expanded to examine not only the players but also the context. What elements of the environment (e.g., organizational culture and climate, nature of tasks, historical context, group characteristics) in which the leadership process is occurring influence it? Certainly, individual leadership attributes, group processes, and outcome achievement are all influenced to varying degrees by the organizational context in which leadership occurs. This likely requires epistemological frameworks that avoid reductionist approaches. As research begins to explore this more fully, findings will need to be used to evolve existing theory. Perhaps one limitation to progress in this area is the relative lack of interdisciplinarity in contemporary theory building. Although there have been increases in the number of disciplines conducting inquiry around political and civic leadership, there are fewer examples of integrative approaches used in the construction of theories. The above structural complexity cannot occur with a singular disciplinary perspective and, indeed, requires considerations from psychology, anthropology, sociology, environmental design, political science, public policy, and education—just to name a few. The evolution of political and civic leadership theory would benefit from diverse and integrative disciplinary perspectives.

Developmental Considerations

Despite recognition of the importance of self-awareness and continuing self-evaluative processes in many contemporary leadership theories, relatively little attention has been directed at understanding how this type of leadership is fostered either in terms of efficacy building or developmentally over time. This is surprising given the ardent claims of postindustrial theorists that leadership is largely a learned process. The scholarship of Ellen Van Velsor and Wilfred H. Drath (2004), Robert G. Lord and Rosalie A. Hall (2005), and David Day, Stephen Zaccaro, and Stanley Halpin (2004) all hold promise for examining a life span approach to leadership development. Theories such as the leadership identity development (LID) model by Komives and her colleagues and authentic leadership by Avolio and his colleagues both address these concerns from a psychological perspective identifying developmental stages associated with the adoption of a relational leader identity and components of evolving self-awareness and reciprocal development between leader and follower, respectively. However, authentic leadership is still principally a conceptual model, and LID has yet to undergo rigorous replication and validation. Furthermore, research is needed in this area that complements psychological understandings.

Groundbreaking research in the areas of genetics and neuroscience offer scientific and physiological complements that have yet to be explored fully. Without an understanding of how to leverage individual and group capacities to engage in leadership in ways consistent with contemporary political and civic leadership theories, the theories themselves may serve as little more than idealistic descriptors. Significantly more attention needs to be paid to understanding how individuals learn, internalize, and enact these approaches to leadership.

Summary

Contemporary political and civic leadership theory represents a departure from conventional models, situating leadership as a relational and reciprocal process, collaborative, grounded in authenticity and deep personal awareness, and directed at enhancing the common good. Not only does this increase the complexity of our understanding of leadership, but also it increases the number of diverse perspectives that inform and contribute to it. This body of theory continues to grow at an exponential rate as shifting epistemological frameworks and emerging research offer alternative and evolving approaches to its study.

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