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An Historical Perspective

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Article abstract

To the extent that there is considerable ambiguity and overlap when it comes to defining the managership and leadership constructs and their components, progress in advancing the field has appreciably slowed; but the frustration of scholars and practitioners is not abated. Hence, what is needed is a good faith effort to take a look at these constructs from 30,000 feet in order to get a better view of the ambiguities and overlaps which are harder to detect from the ground level. Such an effort invariably requires an historical perspective. Precise definitions of management and leadership constructs are necessary so that researchers possess adequate constructs required for formulating testable hypotheses. Moreover, international and American scholars need to be on the same page. Until that is accomplished, progress in advancing the field will continue to be stymied. Toward that end, this effort attempts to identify the ambiguities and overlaps and proposes tentative solutions.

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A View of Managership and Leadership from 30,000 Feet: An Historical Perspective

by

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To the extent that there is considerable ambiguity and overlap when it comes to defining the managership and leadership constructs and their components, progress in advancing the field has appreciably slowed; but the frustration of scholars and practitioners is not abated. Hence, what is needed is a good faith effort to take a look at these constructs from 30,000 feet in order to get a better view of the ambiguities and overlaps which are harder to detect from the ground level. Such an effort invariably requires an historical perspective. Precise definitions of management and leadership constructs are necessary so that researchers possess adequate constructs required for formulating testable hypotheses. Moreover, international and American scholars need to be on the same page. Until that is accomplished, progress in advancing the field will continue to be stymied. Toward that end, this effort attempts to identify the ambiguities and overlaps and proposes tentative solutions.

1. Introduction

Although most authorities acknowledge a distinction between managership and leadership, nonetheless, a consensus is lacking regarding their relationship to each other. Some authorities, such as Mintzberg (1973), consider leadership to be just one of ten managerial roles, while others, such as Gardner (1987), subsume managership under leadership. Gardner's definition covers just about every topic contained in a management textbook save leadership. Therefore, the extreme overlap negates the utility of the construct.

Kotter (1995) complicates matters even further by asserting that leadership and management are two distinctive, albeit complementary, systems of action. Management is about coping with complexity while leadership is about coping with change. Kotter may very well have stumbled across a distinction without a difference. Most importantly, change can be quite complex. Moreover, Kotter (1995) proposes that managers plan while leaders provide direction. A plan, however, is a blueprint for the future arrived at in a systematic fashion, and if that is not providing direction, what is?

The ambiguity and overlap of leadership constructs has led scholars, such as Bird, Mendenhall, Stevens, and Oddou (2010) and Pfeffer (1978), to question the utility of the leadership construct. It appears that persons writing on managership and leadership include in the definitions as many roles and/or functions as come to mind, if for no other reason than to differentiate their definition from that of others so that it appears as an original contribution. Unfortunately, practitioners observing these constructs from the ground-level frequently miss the ambiguities and overlaps. To discourage such tendencies, the authors recommend that future writing on these topics include agreed upon components of the constructs that are unambiguous and lack overlap. Editors of journals and books should enforce this requirement even when “new” theories, paradigms, and models are alluring.

The "natural sciences" require precise definitions of their constructs, and so should the "social sciences," if meaningful progress is to be made. For example, the Vroom et al. (1973) leadership model appears in some textbooks under decision-making and in others under leadership. This is understandable since their leadership theory deals with decision-making, and decisions constitute a key element of direction (Kotlyar & Karakowsky, 2007). A vital reason clear definitions prove useful is that they permit researchers to formulate precise hypotheses to test empirically.

2. Starting at the Beginning

Historians, statesmen, and political philosophers, such as Niccolo Machiavelli, have written about leadership for a very long time, and produced the "great man/woman approach to leadership. Unfortunately, this theory is really a tautology. That is, great leadership is synonymous with impressive achievement. Hence, high achievers are great leaders and vice versa. However, most serious scholars know that tautologies are of little use.

Managership, on the other hand, as a serious field of inquiry, came into its own in the 1950's with the work of Koontz and O'Donnell (1959) leading the way. These two researchers postulated that management consisted of the following functions; planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling. It certainly appears as though they used "directing" in the same sense as "leading." However, this not so subtle observation apparently escaped certain authors such as Gardner (1987). Moreover, there is overlap in the Koontz and O'Donnell classification since planning is a form of controlling the direction of the organization. In fact, direction itself is a form of control since it ensures that the organization stays the course. A good example of the point just made is the "Program Evaluation and Review Technique (PERT)" also known as the "Critical Path Method." PERT is both a useful planning tool as well as an effective control mechanism. Perhaps, describing the sundry control methods and the situations under which each would be appropriate would be more productive. Ditto for the various methods of motivating and influencing organizational members.

Mintzberg (1973) in his magnum opus, "The Nature of Managerial Work," expanded managerial functions into a list of ten managerial roles: 1) figurehead, 2) liaison, 3) monitor, 4) disseminator, 5) spokesman, 6) entrepreneur, 7) disturbance handler, 8) resource allocator, 9) negotiator, and 10) leader. Obviously, Mintzberg uses leading in the same sense as Koontz and O'Donnell use directing, since directing is an omission from Mintzberg's list just as leading is conspicuous by its absence from the Koontz and O'Donnell list.

While there appears to be a reluctance to condense managerial roles, the Ohio State University and the University of Michigan Leadership Studies, employing factor analysis, collapsed the disparate leadership functions into "concern for production (job centered)" and "consideration (employee oriented)" (Fleishman, 1953, Likert, 1961). The Michigan Studies also demonstrated that employee oriented leader behaviors enabled by general supervision produced the best results. The publication of Blake and Mouton's (1991) "Managerial Grid" gave the Ohio State and University of Michigan studies greater visibility, and prescribed a leadership style high on both "concern for people'" as well as "concern for production," which they labeled as "team management," as the ideal leadership style. The Ohio State and Michigan studies involved only supervisors in their samples and, thus, generalization of the results from these investigations is limited when applied to middle- and upper-management. This limitation, however, has been observed mostly in the breach. To their credit, the Ohio State and University of Michigan studies pretty much neutralized the influence of "Scientific Management," which emphasized extreme directive supervision (enforcing the one best way arrived at through time and motion study) to accomplish a given task and was an influential leadership model, albeit a controversial one, up to that point.

Lastly, numerous authors state that effective managers are good motivators, accomplished communicators, and effective listeners. They make these claims on behalf of leaders as well. Are these attributes then a part of managership or leadership (Muczyk & Adler, 2002)? In any case, the explosion of staff departments or specialized groups such as personnel departments, planning staffs, industrial engineers, quality control specialists, public relations departments, labor relations specialists, etc., in organizations of all sizes, eliminated some of the managerial functions from the domain of managers. Interestingly enough, it was the Iowa Leadership Studies (Lewin et al., 1939) that set the direction of leadership conceptualization and research with their leadership classification of autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. Even though these studies used ad hoc groups of students, not intended for application to actual organizations, they set the stage for "situational leadership theories" which assume that different leadership styles depend on the characteristics of the leader, attributes of the subordinates, and circumstances of the situation. This tenuous application constitutes an antidote to the "one best" leadership style approach.

Let us examine one popular situational leadership theory, that of Hersey and Blanchard (1977). They assume that the maturity level of the group, which is defined clearly, calls for four leadership styles (telling, selling, participating, and delegating). However, there is both ambiguity and overlap in these styles. For example, is telling simply deciding unilaterally and instructing subordinates to execute the task in accordance with the decision, while selling is the same thing, but accompanied by an explanation of the reason for the decision? Does participating involve any follow up? Delegation is clear enough. It is just parceling out the tasks, and leaving all the decisions and execution follow up to subordinates; while holding subordinates accountable for results only. Scholars should refrain from sacrificing intellectual manageability, especially on the part of practitioners and students, by minimizing avoidable complexity and nuance.

3. Leadership, Influence, and Motivation

Ideally, as Dwight Eisenhower put it, "Leadership is the art of getting someone else to do something that you want done because he/she wants to do it." Thus, influence is critical with respect to both leadership and managership. After all, leadership at the very minimum requires setting a direction and influencing subordinates to move in that direction. French and Raven (1959) shed considerable light by identifying the bases of power, which are a prerequisite to influence. Their six bases of social power available to the leader's or manager's use of influence are: reward, coercion, legitimate, expert, referent, and informational. It is useful to augment this list with leading by example. Many organizational members learn how to lead and manage by observing their superiors.

While it is true that some organizational members are internally motivated (Maslow, 1943), most, however, need to be externally influenced to pursue organizational goals (Adams, 1963). For example, Graen's (1976) "Leader-Member Exchange Theory" is as much about influence as leadership; however, it appears under leadership in books on the subject. Should a clear definitional distinction be formalized for both? House (1971) in his "Path Goal Leadership Theory" appreciates the critical nature of organizational goal attainment and its connection to leadership by proposing that the principal role of a leader is to clarify for subordinates the path to goal attainment, especially by removing obstacles to goal achievement. He no doubt realized that both goals and leadership provide indispensable direction. Managers practicing Management by Objectives (MBO) have the same requirement. This is another example of the overlap of the two constructs. It may very well be that the distinction between leadership and managership is as simple as this: Effective managers are good leaders while ineffective ones are poor leaders. After all, both plan, organize, direct, and control. Those who perform these functions well are good managers or leaders, while those who perform them poorly are inadequate managers or leaders. An inspirational personality on the part of the manager/leader is a luxury and not a necessity. Could it be that Pfeffer's suggestion that the leadership construct is little more than a redundancy was on the money after all?

Like Vroom et al. (1973, 1988), Muczyk and Reimann (1987) recognize the difference between how decisions are made and goals are set and the degree of follow up on decision execution and goal attainment. Hence, they incorporate decision-making and direction in their four distinct types of leadership styles (directive democrat, permissive democrat, directive autocrat, and permissive autocrat), and specify the conditions under which each is appropriate (See Muczyk and Reimann, 1987; Muczyk and Adler, 2002). There is no analog to “laissez-faire” leadership since for all practical purposes it is the same thing as no leadership. Furthermore, they recommend that leadership complements, such as Management by Objectives (MBO) be aligned with each leadership style (Muczyk and Reimann, 1989). This is an instance where a clear distinction between the variables is made. When it comes to delegating, the permissive democrat is most likely to do so, while the directive autocrat is least likely to delegate.

4. Three Levels of Leadership Abstraction

Muczyk and Adler (2002) attempt to elucidate the leadership construct by examining leadership from three levels of abstraction. They are:

<u>Transformational or Big Leadership.</u> Bass (1985) defines transformational leadership as increasing subordinates' awareness of the importance of their tasks and performing them well; making subordinates aware of their needs for personal growth, development, and accomplishment; and motivating subordinates to strive for the good of the whole as opposed to pursuing their personal agendas. However, this definition pertains to leadership at all levels of abstraction and contributes little to the goal of clarifying constructs. For our purposes, an operational definition of transformational leadership consists of: inspirational vision, dynamic personality (charisma), crisis situation, and dramatic acts to bring about the transformation. Inspirational vision differs from a plan in that it does not occur to organizational members until it is revealed by the leader. Typically, transformational leadership is big leadership because it applies to top executives of organizations and is relatively uncommon, since few organizations need transforming as opposed to continuous tweaking.

<u>Mid-Range Leadership.</u> While transformational leadership is needed at the top and then only in some organizations, leadership in other forms is essential practically everywhere else unless there are practical substitutes for it. Most mid-range leadership theories can be construed, at least in some measure, as transactional in nature, since they are predicated either explicitly or implicitly on the idea of a “social compact” between the leader and subordinates. That is, leaders formulate an agenda and subordinates comply because there is something in it for both parties. Big leadership theories, on the other hand, tend to focus on the leader and ignore the many instances when subordinates exert upward influence. The Muczyk and Adler (2002) schema, which posits four distinct leadership styles and stipulates the circumstances under which each is appropriate, also captures the role that subordinates play, and recognizes that leadership can be a shared process as well.

<u>Small Leadership.</u> Just as transformational leadership is found at the apex of organizations, small leadership is to be found at the bottom. Since small leadership encompasses the countless little acts of leadership that create and maintain the trust level between the leader and subordinates, it is necessary in order to forge and perpetuate the social compact that facilitates high productivity and morale, and, hence, is vital to the implementation of the larger leadership dimensions (See McGill and Slocum, 1988 for greater detail).

5. Leadership as an International Construct

More work from international scholars is focusing on global leadership (Oddou, and Mendenhall, 2008; Osland, 2013). Therefore, it is imperative that this construct be universally defined so that international and American scholars are on the same page. Toward that end Muczyk and Holt (2008) integrate the Project GLOBE cultural imperatives with mainstream leadership identified by American scholars to produce global leadership prescriptions (See Table 1). While Muczyk and Reimann (1987) view consideration, concern for production, and incentive for performance normative components and participation and follow up situational in a U.S. context, according to Muczyk and Holt (2008), all leadership determinants are situational in an international context.

Table 1. Aligning National Cultural Determinants with the Muczyk and Reimann Leadership Dimensions

Muczyk & Reimann	Global Leadership Factors
Leadership Consideration	Assertiveness
	Gender differentiation
	Humane orientation
Concern for production	Uncertainty
	Performance orientation
	Time orientation
	Environmental orientation
Incentive for performance	Individualism-collectivism
	Performance orientation
Democracy-Autocracy	Power Distance
	Individualism-collectivism
	Masculinity-femininity
	Uncertainty avoidance
	Perceived role hierarchy
	Environmental orientation
	Acceptability of bypassing chain of command

Adapted from Muczyk and Holt (2008), p. 282.

6. The Paralyzing Effect of Complexity

Theory complexity is analogous to the overwhelming task. Both create an action paralysis. With regard to the overwhelming task, the paralysis can be overcome by breaking the complex task into a number of smaller ones. In case of the very complex theory, rational simplification is the answer. Implicit Leadership Theory (ILT) is a good example (Foti and Lord, 1987). ILT states that individuals create cognitive representations of the world, and use these preconceived notions to interpret their surroundings and control behaviors. ILT suggests that group members have implicit expectations and assumptions about the personal characteristics, traits, and qualities that are inherent in a leader. These assumptions then guide an individual's response to leaders. Apparently, advocates of ILT assume that at least sizable groups form the same or similar assumptions. Otherwise, the theory would be too individualistic to be useful. Since different cultures produce different preconceived notions, to be practical, a different implicit leadership theory needs to be developed for at least each distinct culture.

7. Consequences of Lack of Precise Definitions

Given the pressure created by the "publish or perish" ethos in research-oriented universities, scholars are incentivised to restate (repackage) existing ideas using terminology currently in vogue. The notion that there are few new ideas is not a serious overreach. Recently, leadership and management literature tends to focus on the concepts of team empowerment, shared leadership, and servant leadership, as well as the consequences, both desirable and otherwise. Karriker, Madden, and Kattell (2017), for instance, argue that shared leadership helps team members mutually influence each other, leading to improved team performance. Lacroix and Verdorfer (20017) also argue that servant leaders assist followers to overcome their fear to lead. Empowerment, on the other hand, has been part of the social science agenda for over 50 years, having been associated with individual (Balkundi and Harrison, 2006), team (Carmeli, Schaubroeck and Tishler, 2011), and organizational (Stewart, Courtright, and Barrick, 2012) benefits. Leach, Wall, and Jackson (2003) define empowerment as "a practice, or set of practices, involving the delegation of responsibility down the hierarchy so as to give employees increased decision-making authority with respect to the execution of their primary work tasks." Team empowerment occurs, thus, when organizational leaders transfer authority to teams to accomplish team goals (Sharma and Kirkman, 2015), and this type of leadership continues to be in high demand due to the continued democratization of formal organizations in societies becoming rapidly industrialized. (Hoch and Dulebohn, 2017; Muller, Sankaran, Drouin, Vaagaasar, Bekker, and Jain, 2018; Wong and Giessner, 2018).

It appears to us that the servant and shared leadership paradigms and team empowerment literature is the same thing as democratic leadership, which has been around for quite some time; as have been illustrations of such negative consequences as the team taking the organization into uncharted or unwanted territory. After all, the more initiative opportunity a work group is afforded, the more likely it is to go its own way leading to unproductive and even harmful consequences (Wong and Giessner, 2018). That is why the Muczyk/Reimann model (Muczyk and Reimann, 1987; Muczyk and Adler, 2002) introduces direction into the four leadership styles. It is the "directive democrat" leader who insures through oversight during the execution phase that the team faithfully attains the goals and executes the decisions that were arrived at in a participative manner.

8. Conclusion

The authors are convinced that unlike in the natural sciences, where constructs are precisely defined, the constructs regarding managership and leadership are not only ambiguous but contain numerous overlaps and an occasional tautology. They contend that this situation causes confusion and frustration, and slows down progress in the field.

Progress could also be facilitated if researchers on the topic use reliable and valid scales to measure leadership styles. Fiedler (1967) employs the "least preferred co-worker scales" in his leadership research, but no one seems to know just what these scales measure. Perhaps the scales used by Likert (1961) and which bear his name should be used to measure leadership components such as "concern for production" and "concern for people" more directly.

Toward the end of producing clearly defined constructs sans overlaps, they identify the problem areas such as definitions of managership, leadership, planning, directing, controlling, motivating, influencing, etc., and offer tentative suggestions for rectifying the situation. Their proposals will not only help to produce precise constructs for meaningful hypothesis testing, but also permit American and international scholars to reconcile differences when researching and writing about such important topics; thereby accelerating progress in the field. Until this is accomplished, the management/leadership literature will remain little more than an imbroglio. Lastly, this effort should remind us that had our constructs been precisely defined in the first place, many of the controversies that swirl around leadership and managerial theories would not have materialized.

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