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Chapter

Introductory Chapter: Leadership Roles Do Not Exist – The Case of Leaders and Managers

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1. Introduction

The concept of leadership roles occupies much of the day-to-day organizational dialog. We speak of leadership teams, of the organizational leadership, of the leadership, and of the lack of leadership with great frequency. In practical contexts, these terms are often used as synonymous with what we call managers who can exercise positional power to manage others. When we discuss the ‘leadership’ of the organization, we often do so without reference to individual character or enactment of leadership. Many refer to ‘leadership’ indiscriminately, and in reference to those who hold senior positions. Those with authority, not those who always have influence.

The emphasis on positions of leadership, as I go on to discuss, offers masquerade to individuals whose leader behaviors are uncultivated, and leadership practices not enacted. Allow me to pose a few questions to orient: are all U.S. Presidents leaders? How about all Australian Prime Ministers, Chief Executive Officers, Vice Chancellors, Chairpersons, and Senior Managers? Or are these people whose role affords them authority and social power. The differences between positional power and other forms of power and influence are not new concepts, with French and Raven [1] conceptualizing social power in the 1950s. And these differences remain important in contemporary work and life.

To provide a couple of simple contemporary examples of the conceptual ambiguity, I offer a brief viewing of my Google News feed (on 27 June 2022). In one article, the Pacific Island Forum highlights three Micronesian leaders will join talks with the Fiji Prime Minister. In another, the BBC [2] comments on the European Union leadership being “noticeably lacking”. Were either of the articles discussing individuals enacting leadership practices, or people with positions and authority based on that position? In this, those members occupying national management roles (e.g., Prime Ministers and Presidents) may be leaders, they may be enacting leadership. Equal too, they may only be leveraging their own position, and never cultivating or practicing great leadership.

The concept of this book was inspired by early work on the domains of leadership (comprising leader, follower, and relationship: [3, 4]) and on the importance of clear specification in research (e.g., levels of analysis: [5]; construct clarity: [6]). In work on authentic followership [7], colleagues and I extended this conversation to argue that the relationship is best understood as two directional relationships of leadership (leader to follower) and followership (follower to leader). This is important, as it allows researchers to begin to understand how leaders enact influence, and how followers respond.
The importance of this text is in beginning to challenge existing practical and theoretical attitudes towards the nature of leadership. That is, no one inherits a title of leader by meeting the selection criteria at interview for a senior management role. Instead, individuals are appointed to management roles that afford opportunities to enact leadership using their own leader behaviors and self. This distinction may seem theoretical on face value, but there are key differences from a practical perspective. It explains moments when individuals are promoted because of their technical competency and struggle to achieve as managers. Their leader behaviors were underdeveloped, and their leadership enactment under-practiced. It also allows practitioners and scholars to identify those in positions of authority who are good leaders.

Wilson and Newstead [8] use a virtue-based leader behavior analysis on female heads of state and their enactment of leadership during the COVID-19 crisis. This study highlights that while individuals hold positions of power, their effectiveness is based in-part on how their values, behaviors, and character as leaders are leveraged. Granted, positions of power offer opportunities to magnify leadership potency... but they do not guarantee it.

This book seeks to allow opportunities for scholars to highlight research that focuses on enabling good leaders and/or great leadership. Scholars writing this text have been asked to avoid conflating the use of position as synonymous with leader or leadership. In doing so, each seeks to extend their current understanding and advance a scholarly position in opposition to positional leadership. To further strengthen and clarify this position, the remainder of this introduction seeks to provide conceptual clarity across three related domains. First, I discuss the difference between influence, power, and authority as key foundations that leading has been defined from. Second, I discuss the conceptual and practical differences between leaders and managers and highlight their convergence and independence. Third, I discuss the differences between good leaders and great leadership. I conclude this chapter with a lens by which to view this book as readers progress through either chronologically or in self-selected sequence.

2. Influence, power, and authority

There are many scholars who before me have sought to define differences in influence, power, manipulation, authority, coercion, among others.

Kellerman [9] argues that power is the capacity of one individual to get another individual to do what they want, regardless of means. Machiavelli Niccolò [10] would perhaps agree, with his text *The Prince* articulating individuals whose primary role it was to obtain and keep power, without regard for consequence. Authority is the likelihood of commands being obeyed by the target individual [11]. The key difference between power and authority seems to be that power is without consent or against someone’s will, and authority relates to position [11].

Leadership, however, is directed towards informal influence leveraged in communication processes to achieve a desired outcome (or work towards it). Yukl [12] broadly defined leadership as:

> The process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individual and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives.
More recently, colleagues and I defined informal influence in the context of authentic leader behaviors:

Informal influence is the ability to inspire and motivate individuals to accomplish goals of their own volition, regardless of rank or position [13].

This book focuses less on the practices of Princes, and the exertion of power over others, and instead on individuals and their practices of influence. As I go on to discuss further, the chapters featured share a pursuit of these individuals being good, and their practices great.

3. The difference between leaders and managers

As has been highlighted briefly, the managerial and leadership differences are not always easy to distinguish. The core difference is often self-referential, and more tangible as an individual enacting leadership (the process of influencing) when stepping into management roles. An individual can also enact management skills (the process of authority) when moving into those management roles. It is worth considering from a practical perspective.

John is a high performing barista in a fast-paced café business with five individual cafés across the city. He, because of his coffee-making competency is promoted to store manager. Because he is not trained to be an effective leader he emulates the previous manager’s style; to use the new position to require his subordinates to meet their team objectives. In this model, the organization receives a less capable manager and loses a high performing front-line staff member. John uses managerial practices to ensure staff meet their objectives, but often requires changes in salary or extrinsic motivators to cultivate continued performance gains.

Sam is an acceptable barista, in a different store, but not the best. People gravitate to her, and she cultivates high quality relationships with those around her. When staff feel uncomfortable speaking to their manager about issues, they reach out to her. She informally mentors some team members to make better coffee, and recognizes that many of her colleagues are far more effective at making coffee than her. She is promoted based on her ability to influence informally, even without a position, and she continues to deploy informal influence in her formal management role. This leads to far greater creativity, job satisfaction, and productivity as Sam supports staff to develop their intrinsic motivation for making great coffee.

In these cases, the key difference is in how they influence their staff to achieve, and how they cultivate team performance. Another difference might include how they build and communicate a vision for the future, and how they bring subordinates into this vision. However, management outcomes tend to be shorter in time frame and often emulate activities described in transactional leadership [15]. Or put simply, using resource deployment – like wages – and to encourage action. Managerialism is often the practice of enumerating these ‘motivators’ into the bureaucracy’s policies and procedures [16], whereas an outcome of effective leadership can often be a lesser need for heavy deontological frameworks applied in organizations. Instead, leaders

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1 see a later chapter on this ‘technical promotion’: [14]
might spend more time building capability in individuals as a key antecedent to organizational performance.

4. Good leaders and great leadership

Good leaders are individuals who enact leadership, and much of the study of leaders has focused on effective leadership styles and personality. I borrow the term good leaders from Toby Newstead and colleagues where they highlights some key differences in good leaders and leadership:

When it comes to leader and leadership development, we argue that it is not simply influence that we should aim to develop. Rather, we suggest that we should seek to connect leaders to the best versions of themselves, to enable leaders to foster meaningful relationships with their counterparts, and to engage effectively and ethically with their organizations, communities, society, and the environment. In other words, we should seek to develop good leaders who engage in good leadership practices [17].

Interestingly, at its core, leadership does not typically have judgment of ‘good’ or ‘bad’ attached. Instead practices of influence can be cultivated in the context of achieving normatively unethical or ethical outcomes. And, in many cases, it may not always be clear what the ethical orientation of an action is, given its ethicality may be viewed quite differently by the actor, and those around them.

Styles of unethical leadership include concepts such as corporate psychopaths [18], dark leadership [19], Machiavellian leadership [20], toxic leadership [21], among others. These styles, while not good leadership, explain how leaders act in negative contexts. I argue that these styles are often ‘low’ performance on a positive leadership style rather than inherently new practices of leadership. Rego et al. [20] discuss the authenticity-Machiavellian grid whereby Machiavellian leadership is considered to exist when authentic leadership is low.

In the study of good leaders and great leadership, taking a positive organizational scholarship (see [22]) does not diminish the importance of understanding conditions when leadership performance is low. Instead, leadership scholars have a critical opportunity to develop solutions to unethical leadership by cultivating good leaders and great leadership. This book focuses on the latter two.

5. Close

Across this book there are stories of leaders across the globe seeking to do, and be, good. The pursuit of this book is to provide a readable tome that supports scholars to upskill in leadership, and likewise practitioners to develop a stronger understanding of leaders and managers. Across the book there will unique leadership contexts drawn upon with diverse methods of data collection, analysis, and synthesis. However, each will be pursuing the expansion of a common theme. That common theme is to support the emergence and understanding of the good leader and of their practices towards great leadership. This may involve using manager-subordinate samples, as is commonplace in leadership research, however they are not the only way to study leaders in context. This text and its comprised chapters offer a thought-provoking
curation of possible directions in leadership, and seeks to extend the current knowledge on the nature of leaders and leadership.

Conflict of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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