

Reflections on Library Leadership: An Examination of Four Leadership Theories

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Introduction

The word *leadership* conjures up images such as someone standing apart from a group but with group members looking at that person for direction. Leadership has often been framed in terms of exerting influence, leading or orchestrating manageable change, setting an example for others to follow, or empowering and inspiring (or motivating) a group to achieve a common goal or vision. James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner add that that the cornerstone of leadership is credibility, or displaying skills and abilities such as being trustworthy, demonstrating integrity, and having a reputation for honesty. Leadership, according to them, also involves the development and clarification of a set of guiding values and the alignment of one's actions with those values.¹ Much of the leadership literature focuses on national or political leaders or those at the top of their organizations—chief executive officers—and their successes. All of these individuals faced substantial challenges, which they overcame, and helped a nation, organization, or industry through a time of uncertainty or a hardship.

Writing on leadership, Peter Northouse notes, “there are many ways to finish the sentence, ‘Leadership is’ In fact, there are almost as many different definitions ... as there are people who have tried to define it.”² No single definition, within and beyond library and information science, dominates. A preferred definition might depend on a person's position within an organization, including a library. For directors and members of a library's senior management team the definition might emphasize the vision they set for the organization and the buy-in of staff and stakeholders to, and the successful implementation of, that vision. Other managers in the organization might not mention the vision in their definition, except to say they

agree with it; they might emphasize implementation of the vision or achievement of common goals as they cope with a changing environment.

Because leadership is not limited to those in managerial positions, those assigned to a team as so-called followers might display particular knowledge, skills, or abilities that enable them on occasion to help guide the team to achieve assigned tasks. Barbara Kellerman provides insight into different types of followers, not all whom support change.³ “Isolates,” for instance, are detached, disinterested, and reinforce the status quo, while “bystanders” do not become engaged in efforts to improve organizational effectiveness. In a later work, she portrays the dark side of leadership, namely bad or negative (incompetent or unethical) leadership, and observes that the results achieved are not always positive or moral.⁴ Thus, the term “leadership” is neutral; it applies to positive and negative leadership. Most often the leadership literature concentrates on positive leadership.

Kellerman argues that leaders and followers are intertwined; followership should not be ignored in any discussion of leadership. The context within which both are situated, she adds, is critical to that discussion. Context goes beyond the organization or the institution overseeing that organization and refers to the national and international environment that impinges on societies and ultimately organizations. That environment encompasses such things as financial crises, terrorism, dysfunctional government, and shifting national, state, and local priorities.⁵

Northouse, among others, characterizes leaders as *assigned* (they occupy a managerial position within an organization) or *emergent* (they are perceived by others as the most influential member of a group or organization regardless of their title).⁶ Someone in an assigned role—including a library director—may not actually demonstrate leadership; some are more managers than leaders.⁷ Furthermore, emergent leaders of an organization might be followers in the larger institution such as when they take direction from a mayor, city manager, or provost. Thus, individuals may be both leaders and followers. The simple characterization of leaders as assigned or emergent is limited.

Leadership Model

One way to view leadership is through models that depict its various components. One such model guided the Simmons College School of Library and Information Science doctoral program, Managerial Leadership in the Information Professions (MLIP). This model accommodates different leadership theories and styles. Leaders use the theories to form their leadership approach or style. Theory explains concepts and advances one's understanding. A style, on the other hand, is based on a combination of one's beliefs, values, comfort level, personality, and preferences; it shows how individuals practice theory and focuses on what leaders do as well as on the leadership traits and behaviors they favor.

The MLIP program focused on managerial leadership predominately for those in positions of senior management in academic and public libraries. Supported by two grants from the Institute of Museums and Library Services (IMLS), the program modified a leadership model developed by the National Center for Healthcare Leadership (see http://www.nchl.org/Documents/Ctrl_Hyperlink/NCHL_Competency_Model-full_uid892012228592.pdf). This competency-based model, http://www.simmons.edu/gslis/docs/phdmlip_models_new_permission.pdf, focused on three primary domains:

1. *Transformation*, which refers to visioning, energizing, and stimulating a change process that coalesces communities, patrons, and professionals around new models of managerial leadership in the information professions.
2. *Accomplishment*, which refers to translating vision and strategy into optimal organizational performance.
3. *People*, which refers to creating an organizational climate that values employees in all their diversity and provides an energizing environment for them.

Each domain had a supporting set of competencies that could be measured upon entry into the program, completion of courses, and at various other stages of program completion. That measurement was connected to a series of outcomes, including graduation rate, publication of student papers in premier journals, passage on a qualifying examination, and defense of the dissertation.

This article selects four leadership theories associated with the Simmons model that have value to the library profession. From a managerial leadership perspective, the focus of these theories is on developing, maintaining, and nurturing long-standing relationships in order to bring people together to achieve a common goal or vision, as well as to support the direction in which the organization is headed.

Emotional Intelligence

In *Primal Leadership*, Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee focus on the emotions of leaders as they set and execute the direction for the organization to take. In doing so, they seek to encourage resonance (bringing out the best in others) and to avoid dissonance or undermining the emotional foundation that lets the workforce accomplish the goals set. Central to their thesis is emotional intelligence (EI), which is the first theory to highlight.⁸

EI, which is essentially a mindset, focuses on the ability of leaders to identify, understand, assess, and regulate their emotions and to manage relationships with people throughout the organization and with assorted stakeholders. EI consists of four domains that leaders need to master in order to maximize their impact on others: (1) self-awareness, which is the ability to recognize and understand their own needs, emotions, and drives as well as the effect they have on others; (2) social awareness, which is the ability to observe and understand the emotions, needs, and concerns of other people, pick up on emotional cues, feel comfortable socially, and recognize the power dynamics in a group or organization; (3) self-management, which is the ability to control impulsive feelings and behaviors, take initiative, follow through on

commitments, and adapt to changing circumstances; and (4) relationship management, which is the ability to develop and maintain good relationships, communicate clearly, inspire and influence others, work well in a team, and manage conflict.

EI serves as a reminder that leaders need to be able to:

- be in touch with their inner feelings (self-awareness)
- exercise self-control
- be aware of how others see them
- understand what others need from them
- focus and eliminate distractions
- let their minds move beyond preconceptions (be innovative and creative)

EI begins with an inward focus and moves externally, or from self-awareness to developing, maintaining, and nurturing relationships with others. When they focus on others, leaders must be empathic and demonstrate an ability to realize what others feel (emotional empathy), sense what others need from them (understanding the perspectives of others), and can explain themselves in meaningful ways (cognitive empathy).

Resonant Leadership

The next theory, resonant leadership, is related to EI and addresses the need for leaders to renew themselves and how they go about doing so in the face of constant challenges and pressures. They renew themselves through mindfulness, the awareness of what could happen to them physically, emotionally, and spiritually; hope, remaining positive as they chart a course of action based on their vision and on clearly articulated goals; and compassion, demonstrating empathy.⁹

Leaders who practice this theory guard against emotions that are contagious and negatively affect everyone around them. They are attuned to people, build a sense of

community, and stay focused as they manage themselves and others effectively under stress and when dealing with ambiguous circumstances. Resonant work environments support well-being, encourage collaboration and innovation, engage and motivate staff and stakeholders, and lead to improved overall performance.

The Four-Frames Of Leadership

The third theory, known as the four frames, offers a way to understand, or diagnose, problem areas within organizations and indicate where managerial leaders need to mobilize organizational resources to effect change. A frame equates to a mental model and consists of ideas and assumptions which help managerial leaders to assemble information into a coherent pattern. With the information gathered, newly hired managerial leaders, for instance, can uncover clues as they gain a more comprehensive picture of what is happening and what to do.

These frames, as Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal explain, are the:

- structural frame, which presents ways to organize and structure groups, departments, and teams to get the desired results
- human resource frame, which looks at how to tailor organizations to satisfy human needs, improve human resource management, and build positive interpersonal and group dynamics
- political frame, which deals with how to cope with power and conflict, build coalitions, hone political skills, and deal with internal and external politics
- symbolic frame, which presents the organization to others through symbols such as ritual, ceremony, stories, and culture. Leaders use symbols to capture attention, portray the organization, give purpose and meaning to

work, build team spirit, frame experiences by providing plausible interpretations of experiences, and communicate a vision.¹⁰

In terms of the four frames, EI is not a major factor regarding the structural frame. Ineffective leaders (petty tyrants) use rules to enforce their position rather than looking at how personal relationships affect the work place. EI becomes more important in the human resource frame, which centers on how people in the organization interact. The goal is to create an organizational climate that values employees and provides an energizing environment for them. Regarding the political frame, people try to adhere to goals framed within the context of the power structure of the organization or institution and to cope with competition for power. EI can be an asset in helping managerial leaders to understand others and to develop a working relationship with them. Finally, for the symbolic frame, EI skills help managerial leaders interpret events in ways that touch the emotions of employees. By understanding what emotions are present in a situation and how people feel about the environment, leaders can respond in ways that tap into those emotions.¹¹

Leadership and Culture

The Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness Research Program (GLOBE) and researchers such as Geert Hofstede, the eminent Dutch psychologist, view the effectiveness of leaders as contextual or embedded in the societal and organizational norms, values, and beliefs of the people being led. They compare societies on cultural dimensions, note differences in cultural influences among different countries, and advance numerous hypotheses about the relationship between national culture and leadership.¹²

GLOBE, however, has generated criticism such as there is no single theory about how culture relates to leadership or influences leadership processes. Existing research has not connected this framework to general leadership theories such as authentic, situational, and

transformational leadership. Nonetheless, GLOBE underscores the importance of national cultures and reminds anyone engaged in the study of leadership that culture should not be ignored. “[G]lobalization and the growing interdependence of our world community,” as Juana Bordas points out, “are making the ability to lead and build community with people from very distinct cultures, nationalities, and ethnic groups fundamental to effective leadership.”¹³ Clearly, “leaders must have the cultural flexibility and adaptability to inspire and guide people who represent the whole rainbow of humanity.”¹⁴

Multicultural Leadership

Multicultural leadership, the final theory discussed in this article, is frequently associated with organizations operating in international settings and with national cultures, such as those depicted in the GLOBE framework.¹⁵ The theory:

- focuses on cultural values (e.g., fairness and equity), influences, practices, collaboration (concentrating on *we* as opposed to *I* in hierarchical leadership), differences, and the relationships among people—within and across cultures—in a multicultural society;
- discourages stifling cultural identity and recognizes that nuances in the practice of multicultural leadership are likely to exist among cultures; and
- recognizes that leaders must earn the respect and trust of those who follow.

The theory might be approached from two perspectives, that of the community (external) and of a given organization (internal). For Native Americans, for example, both perspectives are intertwined. The concept of rationality, for them, focuses on human beings being responsible for acting with wisdom, respect, love, honesty, humility, bravery, and truth toward each other and the environment because they are related. This concept may cast the community in terms of

rebuilding the tribal nation and recognizes that, when people serve the community, they honor themselves and their families, including their ancestors.¹⁶

Latino leaders, another example, treat people as if they are part of their extended family, and they view leadership from a group perspective as they care about others and their well-being. They want to empower communities; they are community stewards who view equity as a core aspect of public service. As Juana Bordas explains, “Leaders who function as community stewards serve the collective, use power for the public good, grow people’s capacity, and encourage everyone’s participation.”¹⁷

Conceptually multicultural leadership and servant leadership share some similarities.¹⁸ Both theories focus on the connection between leaders and followers. Leaders are ethical and share values with followers. Leaders empathize with followers and nurture their development and ability to accomplish organizational goals. Both theories seem to share the same ten characteristics, among which are concern about the personal well-being of followers and a commitment to their work-place growth.¹⁹

Leadership Traits

An Internet search on the topic of “leadership trait list” produces a wide variety of general traits; as well, an examination of the works of numerous leadership theorists and researchers suggest assorted traits that leaders hold, alone or in combination (traits held collectively by an organization’s entire senior management team). Within library and information science, researchers have explored traits associated with EI, some of which include creating greater self-awareness (e.g., recognition of one’s own emotions and how they affect one’s thoughts and behavior, knowledge of one’s strengths and weaknesses, and discovery of ways to offset those weaknesses); adaptive capacity (adapting to an environment in which the organization is changing); the ability to motivate or influence others; trustworthiness and honesty; being visionary; being an effective communicator; and engaging in active listening (listening and

responding to another person in a way that results in mutual understanding).²⁰ Some of these traits might also apply to members of teams, individuals in non-managerial positions.

A list of managerial leadership traits might be combined with cultural competences—the knowledge, interpersonal skills, and behaviors that enable individuals to work effectively across cultures.²¹ Leaders shape the organizational culture by gaining staff buy-in to the vision set and by helping managers and the workforce to be familiar and proficient with cultural competencies and leadership traits as they seek to make the vision a reality. The goal is to make the organization more effective in the process.

For Native Americans those values center on service and the community. Specific values might include, among others, listening to what others say, respect for the elderly, and participation in groups (teams). The belief is that the environment and organizations change as a more diverse group of people is hired and greater interaction among different cultural groups occur. Hiring one individual as a “token” of a group is not the same as including greater diversity in managing change effectively and building buy-in to the vision set for the organization.

Conclusion

Managerial leaders rely on different theories and styles, depending on the situation they are addressing. All management situations involve people and relationships. For this reason, leaders must be effective in applying EI, conducting an organization and institution scan through the application of the four frames and managing the mood and performance of everyone in the organization. As leaders address myriad complex issues and pressures, it is critical that effective, positive leadership remains sustainable. As a consequence, it is important for leaders to engage in those resonant relationships they find successful to their own renewal. Through renewal (resonant leadership) leaders seek to prevent inner turmoil and from having that turmoil spread to other managers and staff. As organizations become even more culturally diverse, there needs to be greater interactions among everyone in the workforce as they work to achieve

a common goal. In addition, greater attention must focus on how best to manage the organizational climate to maximize those interactions as organizations and people continue to adapt and change.

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¹ James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge*, 4th ed. (San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2007).

² Peter G. Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice*, 7th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2016), p. 2.

³ Barbara Kellerman, *Followership: How Followers Are Creating Change and Changing Leaders* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2004).

⁴ Barbara Kellerman, *Bad Leadership: What It Is, How It Happens, Why It Matters* (Boston: Harvard Business Press, 2013).

⁵ Barbara Kellerman, *Hard Times: Leadership in America* (Stanford, CA: Stanford Business University Press, 2013).

⁶ Northouse, *Leadership*, p. 8.

⁷ For a discussion of the differences between leadership and management, see, for instance, Warren Bennis, *On Becoming a Leader* (New York: Basic Books, 2009).

⁸ Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence* (Boston: Harvard Business School Publishing, 2013).

⁹ See Richard Boyatzis and Annie McKee, *Resonant Leadership: Renewing Yourself and Connecting with Others through Mindfulness, Hope, and Compassion* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2005).

¹⁰ Lee G. Bolman and Terrence E. Deal, *Reframing Organizations: Artistry, Choice, & Leadership* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2013).

¹¹ Peter Hernon, Joan Giesecke, and Camila A. Alire, *Academic Librarians as Emotionally Intelligent Leaders* (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2008), pp. 75-77.

¹² See Peter Hernon and Niels Ole Pors, ed., *Library Leadership in the United States and Europe: A Comparative Study of Academic and Public Libraries* (Santa Barbara, CA: Libraries Unlimited, 2013), pp. 15-18.

¹³ Juana Bordas, *Salsa, Soul, and Spirit: Leadership for a Multicultural Age* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Pub., 2012), p. ix.

¹⁴ Bordas, *Salsa, Soul, and Spirit*, p. ix.

¹⁵ See Robert J. House, et al. (eds.), *Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2004).

¹⁶ Shawn Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Halifax & Winnipeg, Canada: Fernwood Publishing, 2008), p. 80.

¹⁷ Bordas, *Salsa, Soul, and Spirit*, p. 114.

¹⁸ Despite the connection to servant leadership presented in this article, Cheryl A. Metoyer issues an important reminder: there is no “single model of American Indian leadership.” As she notes, leadership in Native American communities “is rooted in cultures,” and leadership is a “powerful force in shaping tribal communities.” See Cheryl A. Metoyer, “Leadership in American Indian Communities: Winter Lessons,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 34, no. 4 (2010), pp. 10, 1.

¹⁹ See Larry C. Sears, “Tracing the Past, Present, and Future of Servant Leadership,” in *Focus on Leadership: Servant Leadership for the 21st Century*, edited by Larry C. Spears and Michele Lawrence (New York; Wiley, 2002), pp. 1-16.

²⁰ See, for instance, Peter Hernon and Nancy Rossiter, ed. *Making a Difference: Leadership and Academic Libraries* (Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited, 2007); Peter Hernon and Nancy Rossiter, “Emotional Intelligence: Which Traits Are Most Prized,” *College & Research Libraries* 67, no. 3 (May 2006): 260-27; Patricia Kreitz, “Leadership and Emotional Intelligence: A Study of University Library Directors and Their Senior Management Teams,” *College & Research Libraries* 70, no. 6 (November 2009): 531-54.

²¹ See “MCH Leadership Competencies,” 2016, http://leadership.mchtraining.net/?page_id=126.