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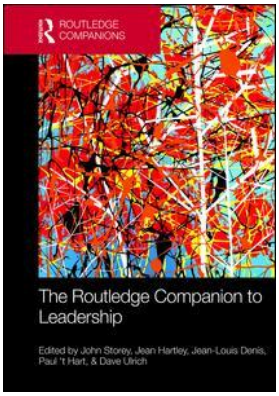

The Routledge Companion to Leadership

John Storey, Jean Hartley, Jean-Louis Denis, Paul 't Hart, Dave Ulrich

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The Routledge Companion to Leadership

Leadership has never been more important – and divisive – than it is today. The idea and discourse of the leader remains a critical factor in organizational and societal performance, but there is evident tension between the persistent focus on the critical importance of individual leaders and the increasing emphasis on collective leadership. *The Routledge Companion to Leadership* provides a survey of the contentious and dynamic discipline of leadership.

This collection covers key themes in the field, including advances in leadership theory, leadership in a range of contexts and geographies, leadership failure, leadership process, and leadership development. Topics range from micro studies to wider political analyses of leadership, taking in unusual but important aspects such as portrayals of leadership in architecture, media, and science fiction. Contributions from 61 internationally renowned authors from 16 countries make available the full range of perspectives, approaches, and insights on the idea of leadership. Providing both a social sciences and a psychological approach, these go beyond common themes to offer diverse perspectives on such topics as emotion and leadership and portrayals of leadership. This volume situates leadership debates and evidence within contemporary leadership crises, while ensuring that the explorations of the issues are of enduring relevance.

With wide and critical coverage of the key topics and potent contextualization of themes in current events, *The Routledge Companion to Leadership* is the ideal resource for graduate study in leadership.

John Storey is Professor of Human Resource Management at The Open University, UK.

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"A 'companion' is defined as someone with whom one spends a lot of time and with whom one travels. I anticipate that leadership educators and researchers throughout the world will relish the opportunity to travel intellectually in the company of the most interesting and provocative contemporary leadership thinkers who are gathered together in this intriguing volume."

Brad Jackson, Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand

"Covering a wide range of topics and written by experts in the field, this collection will be a valuable resource to all students of leadership looking for the most up-to-date and challenging thinking concerning this ubiquitous yet illusive phenomenon."

Donna Ladkin, Plymouth University, UK

"This comprehensive book of leadership essays is an important addition to our understanding of this crucial element of social, economic and political organization in every society. Sophisticated in its framing, wide-ranging in its focus, this is a book that will be useful for every student of leadership, regardless of their field."

Stanley Renshon, City University of New York, USA

"Today, there is no shortage of encyclopedias and handbooks on leadership. Yet this excellent collection of chapters, co-edited by a team of accomplished leadership scholars from various fields, marks a most welcome and important addition to the international literature. While too often editors leave the crucial task of developing meaningful distinctions between, for example, conceptualizing, practicing and evaluating leadership, to their readers, this companion does a marvelous job of bringing clarity, structure and perspective to a burgeoning field that has become notorious for its elusiveness. A truly indispensable resource."

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Edited by John Storey, Jean Hartley, Jean-Louis Denis, Paul 't Hart and Dave Ulrich

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Preface

John Storey, Jean Hartley, Jean-Louis Denis, Paul 't Hart and Dave Ulrich

As a practice and as a field of study, 'leadership' is an object of fascination, a source of concern, and an occasion for hope, anticipation, scepticism and aspiration. In consequence of this mix of responses, discussions about leadership are often animated, emotional, vibrant and contested. Leadership, as a process, implies the existence of one or more agents enacting something interpreted as meriting this label. These agents or leaders tend to be of inherent interest because they usually exercise influence and have power; they create, or have created for them, a narrative: how they came to acquire power, how they try to hold on to it, how they exercise it and sometimes how they lose it. Many a legend – indeed numerous examples of story-telling – hinge on the part played by the leader. These central characters may be Emperors, Chieftains, Tsars, Kings and Queens, Presidents, Generals, Chief Executives, Shoguns, Warlords or Sultans. The drama of their interactions with their 'followers', their rivals and other players is the very stuff of theatre, novels, news, and indeed of everyday discourse and gossip.

Leaders of organizations (such as chief executives) and within organizations (such as divisional or departmental heads) share some of the connotations of position power and sometimes of charisma. Moreover, as we will see, even this long list of examples leans towards only one form of leader and leadership. Each of them tends to carry connotations of authority, power, strength and rulership. But there are others who are sometimes recognized as exercising leadership even though they do not occupy a formal position. The focus on organizational leadership is a relatively new phenomenon; the 1990s saw an upsurge in attention, whereas before then organizations were administered or managed. As noted elsewhere (Storey 2011), in response to economic and social challenges, numerous organizations in sectors as diverse as the police, public administration, education, health and local government started to look to 'leadership' as the appropriate answer.

The words 'leader' and 'leadership' trigger fundamental, though very varied, thoughts, emotions and inferences which find reflection in the variety of academic constructs. They often have associations with position in a hierarchy and perhaps even domination; yet they may also trigger ideas of saviour, pathfinder and even messiah. At a psychological level, the terms may prompt feelings associated with loyalty, worship, dependency, parent–child relationships, narcissism, neurosis, projection and splitting. For this range of reasons and more, leadership is

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an emotionally charged and intellectually challenging construct. At one end of the spectrum is a literature which amounts to hagiography and hero worship; at the other end are sharp critiques. Somewhere in between are multiple approaches, some of which eschew the idea of a charismatic and transformational leader in the traditional sense and instead direct attention to leadership as a skilful, adaptive practice exercised potentially outside the formal authority structure (Heifetz 1994). This realm of practice carries its own potential for excitement as it may challenge extant assumptions and expectations and so its disruptive nature may not always be appreciated or applauded.

In this introduction, we look at the reasons for the continued fascination, the source of the concerns, and the nature of the scepticism and hopefulness, before turning to an outline of the contributions made by this collection of chapters.

Leadership as a Source of Fascination

Despite the many concerns, it is evident that leadership remains a source of persistent and extensive fascination. This fascination stems from a number of sources. Books on leading, leaders and leadership constitute one of the most popular publishing genres. A search for 'leadership' on the web results in many thousands of books and even more journal articles. Many of the books can be seen as ventures in self-improvement – aspiring to leadership and aspiring to self-improvement being seen as close cousins. The genre shades off into the cult of celebrity, with books purporting to impart the secrets of successful leadership from Sir Alex Ferguson (Ferguson and Moritz 2015), Sir Richard Branson (Branson 2015), Steve Jobs (Isaacson 2011) and many others. Close neighbours include books and leadership development seminars featuring explorers, such as Ernest Shackleton (Smith 2015), sportsmen and women, such as cricketer Mike Brearley (Brearley 2015), and former military leaders, such as General McCrystal's extrapolation about leadership from the Iraq campaign to business organizations (McCrystal 2015).

The fascination is found also in the remarkable renaissance of leadership studies among academics and academic institutions. The number of academic journals devoted to leadership and the frequency of their issues continue to grow. Academic and practitioner articles and papers on the subject grow exponentially. A web search for the single term 'leadership' resulted in nearly 3 million articles. And leadership is not only being written about, it is being taught. Business schools throughout the world increasingly present themselves as purveyors of leadership skills. Harvard Business School offers a range of programmes on leadership with the Program for Leadership Development (PLD) being one of the foremost. The prospectus states: 'As global competition intensifies, visionary companies are investing in a pipeline of emerging executives who can help them build and secure a competitive edge.' It suggests that 'You will emerge from the PLD ready to drive change, innovation, and growth in any economy.' For $47,000, participants enjoy two 2-week campus-based sessions plus two distance-learning modules. This would seem to be a valuable learning experience indeed, costing, as it does, nearly $5,000 per day. Harvard is not alone. Numerous business schools have joined the bandwagon and added leadership to their portfolios. For example, the London Business School has a range of offerings. Its prospectus states: 'We're creating a generation of leaders who have a global view, a strong sense of community, and who lead from their heart, as well as their head.' Leaders can 'make the world a better place'. To drive this agenda it has launched a Leadership Institute. The LBS Senior Executive Programme, like Harvard's, offers two 2-week blocks of study for £29,500 ($44,643) – though without the added distance-learning element. One of the course participants, already a success in his chosen field, says that the programme helped him: 'Learn who I am.' A faculty lead on the SEP suggests that they will 'Look at you on a good day, look at

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you on a bad day and at your values'; they will also uncover 'Your USP' and 'Your Leadership Brand'. Thus, as with any such programme, there is an intriguing and exciting connection between the individual self and the wider world. Both aspects – the individual and the wider context – are apparently open to the exciting possibility of change. Not only that, but work on the one can lead to impact on the other. Little wonder that leadership is a source of fascination: change oneself and change the world.

Nor is this mere bombast. There is a material base to the phenomenon. Graduate training schemes are geared, unashamedly, to finding and nurturing the next generation of top leaders. Thus, graduates aspiring to take up a place on a graduate training programme find that they are signing up to a process which is geared towards the goal of cultivating and sorting and sifting future top leaders. Up or out is the mantra. For ambitious graduates it may be difficult not to enlist on the leadership journey. As McKinsey Consultants make clear: 'We look for people who strive to lead – lead themselves, their teams, their communities – and can foster effective teamwork in order to drive results for clients and positive change in complex organizations.'

More widely, leadership is a hugely significant cultural phenomenon. It is found represented in current popular media such as news, sport and film, and in art, architecture and historiography. It is a subject of conversation among 'ordinary workers'. It is commonplace to hear people on their daily commute, or in the pub, discussing their 'bosses' and in effect evaluating their behaviour and performance. The fascination here may not be based on admiration or respect, but it is often an interest in how 'the leader' (at whatever level) is behaving or is likely to behave. The evaluations are often a mixed brew of criticism, admiration, fear, bemusement and contempt.

Leaders and leadership are a source of fascination also because they may impact heavily on other people's lives. Leaders may maintain and perpetuate the establishment or the regime. Conversely, movements to curtail or even supplant the prevailing regime normally involve and require an 'alternative' leader or set of leaders. Such processes of contestation may develop in different ways – the 'revolutionary' leader may prevail and become part of a new establishment, may be defeated or may be incorporated. On the other hand, the romance of leadership (the belief that leadership matters) may cause reverse attribution, in which people seek to identify the leader who is thought to have caused the success – even where alternative analysis might suggest other causes which do not involve leadership.

There are other reasons for fascination with the idea of leadership that operate on a much more grounded scale. A growing number of works explore the role of everyday informal leaders, the 'ordinary persons' doing extraordinary things. This is the idea of 'learning leadership' through practical action (Antonacopoulou and Bento 2011; Ibarra 2015). The power and pull of this conceptualization are not hard to imagine. It casts leadership in a very different light. It opens up the scope for significant social action; it opens up the potential for almost anyone to 'make a difference' – with potential reverberations across a wide canvas.

Leadership as a Source of Concern

The reasons for unease about leadership stem from a number of different types of concern.

At a practical level, leadership is a common cause for concern because there is a prevalent notion that there is a serious 'shortage' of leadership talent. Numerous global surveys, in both the private and public sectors, persist in reporting that a gap between supply and demand for leaders is supposedly one of the top worries among corporate chiefs. The so-called 'war for talent' is fuelled in part by this perceived scarcity. A perceived lack of leadership talent and capability is found alike in the political sphere and the corporate.

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However, the concern is not only about scarcity. There are qualms and fears about the *quality* of leaders. Numerous corporate scandals involving lying, cheating, larceny and greed have followed a trail which points to grievous failures among those supposedly leading (Stein 2007). That such scandals coincide with ever-increasing inequality of reward only adds to the concern and to the sense of injustice and outrage. Reports of committees of inquiry into corporate lapses and catastrophes, whether in healthcare, social care or banking, tend often to conclude that the problems could be traced to failures in leadership and the lack of appropriate leadership quality. In his *Leadership BS*, Jeffrey Pfeffer seeks to expose the underlying reasons for so much reported failure of leadership despite the plethora of courses and materials which are available. He suggests that much of the advice is 'sugar laced but toxic' and that 'the leadership industry has failed' (Pfeffer 2015, p. 4). Indications of failure include the prevalence of workplaces with large numbers of disengaged and dissatisfied workers, and the notable failure to produce sufficient effective leaders.

And there are related concerns about the misuse of power. These regularly accompany a model based on a pyramidal hierarchy of leaders. Such a model often connotes unequal access to resources, to rewards, to power and to status. Leadership often accrues and is equated with position power. Military units require a CO (a commanding officer), business organizations require CEOs (chief executive officers) and schools seek headteachers. The 'someone-in-charge' is frequently seen as 'the leader' albeit it is also often accepted that there may be other leaders, some of whom may act without formal title. Yet there are many examples of leadership undertaken without positional power. These include those people who led movements for change, such as Mahatma Gandhi in India, John Garang in South Sudan, Martin Luther King in the USA and Nelson Mandela in South Africa. There are also other examples, such as the suffragettes, and everyday actions of citizens, such as Caroline Criado Perez who campaigned – in the face of opposition and hostility – to have women on the banknotes of the Bank of England. There are also numerous examples of leadership in the lives of 'ordinary' citizens.

Concerns about the concentration of power can overlap into concerns about the nature and exercise of leadership. Leaders may be narcissistic and egotistical; they may also be arrogant and domineering. As a remedy or alternative, there is increasing interest in 'authentic' and spiritual leadership as opposed to the arrogant and self-serving modes of leadership.

As leadership connects with, and in everyday thinking usually implies, 'followership', the interplay between these can be a further source of concern. Psychological and psychoanalytic perspectives may suggest that deeply held reservations about authority figures may impact on people's views about leaders. Irrespective of evidence about efficacy of outcomes there may simply be an ideological and value preference and desire for shared leadership. There are related avenues of intellectual inquiry which attend to the complexities of mutual influence and the need for collaboration and coalition building.

In the face of these concerns, there continues to be a hope that leaders can influence others in a positive way. Leaders may multiply and build other leaders; lead by positive example and influence; share power to empower others; and create abundant organizations.

Leadership as a Source of Scepticism and Also of Hope

There remains a current of deep scepticism among many academics about leadership both as practised and as studied. Pfeffer's (2015) critique, cited above, is but one of the more developed of the criticisms. The critique stems from a number of sources. Many academic observers work from a values base which is inclined positively towards democratic, emancipatory and shared power, and is disinclined towards, and suspicious of, hierarchy and concentrations of

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power. Partly, perhaps, as a consequence of working in collegial, scholastic settings, there is a marked preference for distributed and shared leadership. Accordingly, pluralistic leadership modes are a prevalent theme in the spheres of education and health. This inclination tends towards a suspicion of, and indeed an antipathy towards, 'heroic' singular leaders or any perpetuating of the myth of the 'great man' with its associated connotations of paternalism, dependency and inequality. There is often a suspicion of the motives of those who strive to be leaders. Are they seeking to accrue unwarranted access to power, influence and rewards? But if democracy is to offset the exercise of overweening and arbitrary power, society also requires the exercise of leadership to create and implement democratic institutions. Leadership which goes beyond mere populism is needed to tackle strategic challenges.

So, in sum, the field of study is replete with tensions and contradictions. Leaders are viewed with both awe and suspicion. Leadership is viewed as a process of influence that may be concentrated or dispersed. So, while there is a backcloth of controversy, there is also an emergent agenda of intellectually exciting and worthy themes which merit serious attention.

The intellectual challenges are many. For example, there are different conceptualizations of 'leadership'. It is commonly and interchangeably used to denote a person, a position and a process. 'Leader' and 'leadership' are often conflated.

There are also different ontological positions associated with different 'tribes' of researchers. In consequence, the field can be remarkably Balkanized and insular. Like speaks with like, but conversations across boundaries are often limited. For example, even those scholars who publish in the two main leadership journals *Leadership* and *Leadership Quarterly* tend not to interact.

Moreover, different phenomena are all treated as leadership. Thus, small group leadership, leadership of large organizations and leadership of social movements tend to be placed in the same basket. Yet the skills required in the exercise of 'near' leadership may bear little resemblance to those needed in the exercise of 'distant' leadership. Many early studies of leadership were conducted in industrial settings with a focus on supervisors in private firms, and as a result the construct was, and often still is, conflated with a position in a hierarchy. In addition, the context of contemporary organizations provide an intriguing landscape for the expression and study of leadership. Organizations are often populated with autonomous groups and individuals such as professionals or highly skilled manpower. Also, new forms of organizing such as virtual networks may stimulate innovative thinking on what we mean by leadership.

Leadership is a construct and its 'presence' can only be inferred. This inference may draw upon empirical indicators but the empirical data is often variable in quality and quantity.

This volume seeks to make a contribution to the development of these issues.

The Contribution of This Companion

To respond to the scepticism, hope and challenges of leadership, this volumes takes a holistic view of the leadership phenomenon and allows space for examination of the diversity of perspectives in the field. We strongly believe in the benefits of looking at a plurality of approaches to get a better sense of the reality of leadership in societies and organizations.

The chapters, which include analytical assessments of leadership, historical overviews, critical perspectives, psychoanalytic, contextualized and ethical assessments, cultural portrayals and assessments of leadership development, are organized into seven parts.

Part I (Conceptualizing Leadership) allows consideration of a wide view. It includes a fundamental consideration of diverse definitions and understandings of the meanings of leader and leadership. At one extreme, it is noted that leadership has been so widely interpreted that it might be considered a 'floating signifier' – a vessel so open that almost any meaning might

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be attributed to it. One approach, as shown in Chapter 1, is to regard it as like a quilt which is comprised of diverse approaches and conceptualizations. Part I also contains chapters which conceptualize leadership in different ways, including as a form of capital which could be measured, as a distributed phenomenon and as a process which underpins a group's social identity in times of crisis.

Part II (Studying Leadership) presents a set of chapters which reveal the rich variety of ways in which the leadership phenomenon can be understood and studied. It underscores a set of tensions that structure contemporary studies of leaders and leadership. Leadership can be conceived as a resource that organizations use to achieve their own goals. From a critical standpoint, it is more or less of an ideology that contributes to reproducing models of conduct in organizations. For others, a careful assessment of the scholarship in the field requires a renewal of the thinking around the classics such as the duality of leaders–followers and the study of leadership across various contexts. The reader exits Part II with a variety of concepts that help make sense of various approaches and perspectives on leadership.

Part III (Practising Leadership) examines leadership in practice in politics, in corporate governance settings, in religion and in health services. These chapters highlight that the leadership phenomenon shows up in diverse settings. Leadership is not a given; it is constructed through interactions in context. It is influenced by the type of organizations in which aspiring leaders evolved. It is also a dynamic phenomenon in which leadership positions are never secured forever. Achieving leadership requires work from agents in organizations.

Part IV (Contextualizing Leadership) assesses leadership in the diverse contexts of time, place, type of problem, globalization and the realms of politics and business organizations.

Part V (Evaluating Leadership) comprises a set of chapters which variously address toxic and destructive leadership; ethical leadership; the impact of leadership on performance outcomes; and leaders as spiritual protagonists. Overall, chapters in this part look at the risk and contribution of a cultural figure of leadership that is so often based on individual heroism and power.

Part VI (Imagining Leadership) contains chapters which explore portrayals of leadership in science fiction, portrayals of leadership in other media and the projection of leadership in architecture. It provides alternate prisms to relate leaders and leadership to broader cultural phenomena in society.

Part VII (Nurturing Leadership) contains chapters which address whether and how leadership might be developed, the diverse approaches to leadership development and a chapter examining how aspiring leadership identity is created. These chapters reveal the interplay between what is offered to emergent leaders and how would-be leaders play their own part in growing into the role.

Concluding Comments

In this short preface we hope we have whetted your appetite to read further and more deeply into the range of offerings on the challenges and opportunities of leadership. In the first part of this introduction, the key issues and controversies were laid out. The second part provides a summary overview of how the team of authors gathered together to produce this volume has responded to the implicit agenda outlined. The continuation of the journey is over to you.

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