LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONS

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For Sue and Sarah

PREFACE

On Tuesday, 13 March 1984, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, Nigel Lawson, conducted his first budget and received wide acclaim for the presentation of his speech as well as its content. A few days later, a commentator in the *Financial Times* remarked upon speculation that Mr Lawson was in the running for the Tory succession as a consequence of his performance: 'That seems to me to be absurd. He is not without ambition, but he is not a leader.' (*Financial Times*, 17 March 1984, p. 30.) He is not a leader. It is so easy to see this comment as unremarkable and move on to another item in the paper. But if the phenomenon of leadership, its nature and its forms, is something which attracts us, such a comment is of interest. In everyday life, the words 'leader' and 'leadership' recur with surprising frequency, yet not always with the same content and meaning. Take a remark such as 'I don't like his style of leadership at all'. Is it denoting the same kinds of attributes as those to which Mr Lawson's commentator was alluding? Possibly not, for the comment upon Mr Lawson seems to refer to him as a person, whereas the other remark seems to refer to what someone does. Suppose that, instead of talking about the Tory succession, the reference was to the Tory *leadership*. Here again we are confronted with another meaning of the idea of a leader, that is, as a lofty position within a hierarchy.

Defining what leadership is or comprises, it should be apparent (if it was not already), is a complex and elusive problem. Within the study of organizational behaviour, the examination of leadership has been a prominent issue, and it is this aspect of the study of leadership which is the focus of the book. The *leitmotif* of this field of research is the quest for the effective leader, although as we shall see there has been a slight drift away from this over-riding emphasis in recent times. The succeeding pages will dwell upon the various theories, approaches and findings relevant to the study of leadership in organizations, the vast bulk of which work has been preoccupied with the issue of leader effectiveness. As such, the book will only deal with a portion of the general study of leadership. The study of leadership in general is well served by Bass's (1981) compendious

handbook, which contains slightly under 200 pages of references! As a result, the author will deal either very briefly or not at all with some topics or issues relating to leadership. Indeed, even within the sub-field of leadership in organizations, the aim is to be selective. An attempt has been made to emphasize the main, and in my view most interesting, approaches and ideas, as well as the main and most interesting findings relating to the selected approaches and ideas. The aim has been to be discursive rather than encyclopaedic, to equip the reader with a facility for talking about leadership such that he or she is sensitive to the complexity of the phenomenon rather than what amounts to a complete but superficial annotated bibliography. Ultimately, then, some controversial choices have been made. Further, this is not a handbook for learning how to become a leader. Indeed, many of the implicit themes of the book will point to the difficulty of developing such programmes.

In addressing the various controversies surrounding the leadership research to be examined here, it has been decided not to side-step the methodological issues involved. Leadership research reflects the whole gamut of methodological approaches in the social sciences, though some are more prominent than others. However, the various research designs and methods have posed interpretive problems for leadership researchers, albeit ones which are common to students of organizational behaviour in general. Very often debates about methodology are as critical to an understanding of research on leadership in organizations as the theoretical and interpretive discussions which abound in this area of study.

This is a textbook in respect of the literature on leadership in organizations. As such, it is oriented to two main groups: students of management who, as part of their course, invariably need to examine theory and research relating to organizational behaviour and the management of human resources; and students of what is variously called social psychology of organizations, industrial psychology, or organizational psychology. In each case, students often find a single chapter on leadership in their respective textbooks; but very often the need to cover a wide range of topics prevents the authors of the more general texts from examining a wide range of issues in connection with the study of leadership. Too often, the single chapter in a textbook glosses over the complexity of the issues. This book seeks to provide a more discursive and more wide-ranging discussion than such very general treatments can usually present. It is hoped that the book will also be of interest and use to students of the sociology of organizations and industry.

It has been very difficult to rid this book entirely of 'sexism'. Some sentences end up looking incredibly tortuous when an attempt is made to moderate sexist language. Wherever feasible, I have sought to combat the problem of sexism.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge some debts. Michael Bresnen and Michael Billig helped me a great deal to curb some eccentric language and to sharpen many ideas; to David Stonestreet of Routledge & Kegan Paul for his help and encouragement; to Peter Lawrence for helping me to get this book under way; to the various authors and publishers who have

allowed me to reproduce their work; and to Gwen Moon and Marjorie Salsbury for unstinting devotion to deciphering my handwriting. None of these people, however, can be held in any way responsible for any deficiencies contained within these covers. I have often noted that the acknowledgments authors present of the contribution of their spouses and children are tinged with guilt. I now know why. My gratitude for the immense sacrifices that my wife and daughter have had to make can only be recorded; to express it would require another volume.

Alan Bryman
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THE IDEA OF LEADERSHIP AND THE METHODOLOGY OF LEADERSHIP RESEARCH

It is tempting to reject the usual starting point for discussions of leadership – namely with its definition – if only because it tends to be a daunting induction for the uninitiated. Writers typically point (quite properly) to the wide range of pertinent definitions (e.g. Gibb, 1969; Stogdill, 1974; Yukl, 1981) and proceed to examine a sample of them. The basic problem is that not only is there a range of definitions, but there is also no consensually agreed one. The absence of a common definition of leadership means that the initial treatment of the topic can very easily become bogged down in a definitional quagmire, providing the reader with an unattractive introduction to a promising area. It is a promising area because in everyday life people seem to believe that leadership matters, that it is important to the realization of a desirable state of affairs. This is what people mean when they bemoan the absence of 'good' or 'strong' leadership or when industrialists seek to recruit to their firm people with the 'right' leadership qualities.

However, this book examines the literature relating to the study of leadership in organizations (firms, schools, the military, etc.) and is not concerned with the totality of leadership research *per se*. Within this domain of study, there is a tendency for there to be a fair degree of concordance among writers. Consider the following definitions:

> Leadership may be considered as the process (act) of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts toward goal setting and goal achievement. (Stogdill, 1950, p. 3)

> leadership is a process of influence between a leader and those who are followers. (Hollander, 1978, p.1)

> Leadership . . . is the behaviour of an individual when he is directing the activities of a group toward a shared goal. (Hemphill and Coons, 1957, p. 7)

> The statement, 'a leader tries to influence other people in a given

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direction' is relatively simple, but it seems to capture the essence of what we mean by leadership . . . (Korman, 1971, p. 115)

'Leadership' is defined as the process of influencing the activities of an organized group toward goal achievement. (Rauch and Behling, 1984, p. 46)

The common elements in these definitions imply that leadership involves a social influence process in which a person steers members of the group towards a goal. Many of the studies which will be examined in this book seem to employ this conception as a working definition of leadership. The emphasis on 'the group' is a common one in leadership theory and research, which conjures the image of a leader with a small coterie of followers. In this connection, many researchers have examined the activities of supervisors or managers in industry and the implications of their behaviour for the sentiments and performance of the subordinates for whom they are responsible. This level of analysis creates a relatively small-scale emphasis in leadership research, for the organization comes to be seen as comprising a plethora of groups and attendant leaders. The organization as a whole, or as an entity *sui generis*, recedes from view in this context. Another aspect of the working definition is that the leader/non-leader distinction is a clear-cut one which is taken to be indicative of role differentiation within the group. This role differentiation may occur in a number of ways, but two chief notions tend to prevail in the literature. Much of the early research on leadership was concerned with the 'emergent' leader, that is the person who becomes a leader in leaderless contexts. Many studies exist which sought to create the conditions for emergent leadership in psychology laboratories, wherein unstructured groups worked on tasks assigned by the experimenter, and the characteristics which distinguished emergent leaders from followers were then assessed. In addition, there have been studies of emergent leadership in natural settings, such as Whyte's (1943) pioneering study of an American street corner gang. In this *prima facie* leaderless context, the process of emergent leadership and its subsequent retention were directly observed. Thus, one form of leadership which has been examined is that which emerges from situations in which there is no formal leadership. The second way in which the leader/non-leader distinction is likely to occur is in the context of formally designated roles. People are appointed to positions in which the exercise of leadership is a prime requirement and it is this context with which the bulk of research into leadership in formal organizations is concerned. As Stogdill and Shartle put it:

It is assumed that it is proper and feasible to make a study of leadership in places where leadership would appear to exist and that if a person occupies a leadership position he is a fit subject for study. (Stogdill and Shartle, 1948, p. 287)

In this conception, the leader is a person who is formally designated as

such. The formal organization throws up a range of such positions for whom 'goal oriented group activities' (Stogdill and Shartle, 1948, p. 287) are an important responsibility. Researchers concerned with leadership in organizations have tended to adopt this strategy, particularly when examining the behaviour of leaders. As a result, as the succeeding chapters will reveal, there tends to be relatively little discussion of informal leadership in organizations, i.e. leadership processes which occur outside the formal blueprints of organizations. The neglect of informal leadership by most investigators can be attributed, not only to a research strategy which focuses on leadership positions, but also to a pervasive preoccupation with leadership effectiveness. Researchers have been particularly concerned with the factors (personal or behavioural) which distinguish the effective from the ineffective leader, 'effectiveness' being construed in a variety of ways but generally taken to involve indications of group productivity, subordinate satisfaction and involvement, and the like. Such research has typically been guided by a belief that it would be possible to refine the selection or training of leaders, if it were known which factors contribute to leadership effectiveness. Because informal leadership is relatively idiosyncratic and not always directed to official organizational goals (Blau, 1956), its relevance for the study of leadership effectiveness was not obvious.

Leadership and influence

The working definition of leadership which, it has been suggested, has provided a general orientation for leadership researchers concerned with organizations, is not without its problems. Quite aside from the fact that the definition includes notions like 'group' and 'goal' which are not as uncontentious as they first appear, it is difficult to distinguish it from other forms of social influence. In particular, it is difficult to distinguish leadership from kindred concepts like power and authority, not least because people in leadership positions typically exert (or have the capacity to exert) power and authority over their immediate subordinates. Indeed, in some approaches to the study of leadership, a deliberate attempt is made to fuse it with the concepts like power (e.g. French and Snyder, 1959; Janda, 1960). The problem of distinguishing leadership from other influence processes has been addressed by Kochan, Schmidt, and De Cotiis (1975) who follow Gibb's (1969, p. 270) assertion that leadership involves 'influencing the actions of others in a shared approach to common or compatible goals'. Similarly, Etzioni (1965) has sought to distinguish leadership from power by suggesting that the former is an influence process which changes the preferences of those being influenced. In terms of such views, leadership is not simply a matter of effecting changes in other people's behaviour, but more to do with enhancing their voluntary compliance. This notion relates to the leader's ability to motivate, an ingredient which is often taken as the *sine qua non* of leadership. While Etzioni's definition subsumes this conception very readily, many of the

definitions which were quoted earlier do not obviously absorb it. This suggests that the working definition which underpins much of the research to be explicated may be at variance with the popular conception of leadership as involving the motivation of others.

This notion is reinforced by a classic study of the work activities of managers by Mintzberg (1973) in which ten managerial roles were delineated as a result of his observations. One of these roles is described as the 'leader role', the key purpose of which

> is to effect an integration between individual needs and organizational goals. The manager must concentrate his efforts so as to bring subordinate and organizational needs into a common accord in order to promote efficient operations. (Mintzberg, 1973, p. 62)[1]

The problem with assessing the manager's leader role is that it infiltrates a great many of his activities which renders leadership a difficult area to study *per se*. When we seek to distinguish leadership from other influence activities, we are effectively attempting to distinguish it from the mere incumbency of a position or status in a formal organizational structure ('headship' as it is often called) to which power and authority accrue. When people talk about the 'leadership of the Conservative Party' they are invariably making a reference to positions of authority within the party; if they say that the Conservative Party lacks leadership, they are unlikely to be referring to the absence of persons in formal authority positions, but to a deficiency in the capacity of Party leaders to motivate and guide backbenchers and, possibly, supporters. It would seem important to maintain a distinction between the leader who is in a leadership position and who has power and authority vested in his or her office, and leadership as an influence process which is more than the exercise of power and authority as Etzioni, for example, suggests. However, as the reader will come to recognize, a great deal of leadership research rides roughshod over these distinctions. Studies abound on the subject of the behaviour of leaders in which the strategy involves discerning the activities of people in positions of leadership, with little reference to how these activities might be indicative of leadership *per se* as distinct from the exercise of power and authority.

The organizational context

Of course, issues associated with power are very relevant to what leaders do, since the power at their disposal affects what they can do. For example, an important component of leadership behaviour, according to some writers (see Chapter 4), is the use by designated leaders of rewards or penalties, for as Mintzberg, observes: 'Each time a manager encourages or criticizes a subordinate he is acting in his capacity as *leader*' (Mintzberg, 1973, p. 61). But the leader's opportunity to encourage or criticize may be affected by how much power he has and organizational policies in

connection with the assessment of subordinates. Nor is the power structure the only constraint on how leaders can behave, for organizations frequently encumber the occupants of offices with rules, job definitions, and a catalogue of procedures which restrict and restrain them (Weber, 1947). Further, research shows that the behaviour of designated leaders is substantially affected by the expectations held of them by their own bosses, subordinates, and peers (e.g. Pfeffer and Salancik, 1975). The climate of an organization may constrain the leader's range of options too.

It was in the light of these issues that Katz and Kahn offered the following useful definition of leadership:

> we consider the essence of organizational leadership to be the influential increment over and above mechanical compliance with the routine directives of the organization. (Katz and Kahn, 1978, p. 528)

This definition directs the researcher to an examination of leadership processes which are over and above conformity to organizational routine and prescription. However, leadership research is disappointing in this respect too, for it often fails to distinguish the routine compliance component of what designated leaders do, from the influential increment ingredient.

Management and leadership

Much of the early research on leadership was concerned with the investigation of the personal traits of leaders (see Chapter 2). The inability of investigators to discern unambiguous traits which permitted discrimination between leaders and non-leaders, or between good and bad leaders, ushered in a lengthy period from the later 1940s onwards in which the behaviour of leaders was the prime focus (see Chapter 3). The main emphasis of the programmes of research during this period was the type or types of leader behaviour associated with group or organizational effectiveness. The most prominent research strategy of this period was that exemplified by Stogdill and Shartle's (1948) proposal, quoted earlier in this chapter, which orientates the investigator to people in *prima facie* positions of leadership. Stogdill and Shartle were themselves prominent figures in the development of the strategy in that they participated in giving birth to the Ohio State Leadership Studies, one of the best-known and most influential programmes (see Chapter 3). Unfortunately, the strategy made it extremely difficult to distinguish between leadership and management. It involved treating managers or supervisors in industry and elsewhere as though they were leaders with little questioning of how one might discriminate between management and leadership. Indeed, there is even a sense in which the authors took the view that this distinction does not matter: 'The question of whether *leaders* or *executives* are being studied appears to be a problem at the verbal level only' (Stogdill and Shartle, 1948, p. 287).

During the period in which leadership behaviour has been a major focus of investigation it has been very difficult for an outside observer to ascertain whether it is leadership or management that the innumerable studies of 'leader behavior' have been examining. Terms like 'leadership style', 'supervisory style', and 'managerial style' tend to be used interchangeably, and seem to all intents and purposes to be addressing the same phenomena. The failure to distinguish between leadership and 'headship' (see the preceding section) and leadership and management in the majority of investigations has prompted the following apt comment:

> Despite these distinctions, leadership research continues to be dominated by studies which in fact deal only with a restricted range of *managerial* behaviours. This may well be a reflection of the difficulties involved in pursuing definitions which do not tie leaders to particular role titles, such as supervisor. (Hosking and Morley, 1982, p. 10)

In recent years, a number of authors have sought to forge a distinction between leadership and management. Zaleznik (1977) draws a distinction between managers and leaders. The former are reactive organization men concerned with routine and short-term projects, whereas

> Leaders adopt a personal and active attitude toward goals. The influence a leader exerts in altering moods, evoking images and expectations, and in establishing specific desires and objectives determines the direction a business takes. The net result of this influence is to change the way people think about what is desirable, possible and necessary. (Zaleznik, 1977, p. 71)

According to this view, leadership entails the creation of a vision about a desired future state which seeks to enmesh all members of an organization in its net. This view is consonant with the view that leadership is distinguishable from the exercise of authority and routine compliance with organizational protocol, by virtue of being an influence process which seeks to secure voluntary compliance to agreed goals and which transcends a slavish acquiescence to routine. A congruent view to that of Zaleznik has been expressed by Bennis who suggests:

> The leader must be a social architect who studies and shapes what is called 'the culture of work' – those intangibles that are so hard to discern but so terribly important in governing the way people act, the values and norms that are subtly transmitted to individuals and groups and that tend to create binding and bonding. (Bennis, 1976, p. 15)

Managing, by contrast, tends to involve a preoccupation with the here-and-now of goal attainment. Not only do these definitions enable one to distinguish leadership from management, they also dovetail well with the interest in the values and culture of organizations (Bryman, 1984b) which

has developed in recent years. Further reference to this issue will be made in Chapter 7.

It should be apparent by this juncture that there is evidence that it is difficult to distinguish leadership from kindred notions of headship, the exercise of power and authority, and management. Moreover, while various writers have attempted to forge distinctions, they have often not been embodied in empirical research, so that the working definition presented above has had a wide currency. In order to discuss the research literature relating to the study of leadership in organizations it is necessary to suspend any attachment to the more refined definitions, and to deal with the relevant literature as it is conventionally recognized. This expedient is necessary because such a large proportion of the literature, as conventionally defined, fails to take the distinctions that have been addressed on board. Instead, they have tended to be underpinned by the loose working definition of leadership. Stogdill (1974) may be correct in his view that there are as many definitions of leadership as there are writers on the subject. However, in the more specific domain of the study of leadership in organizations, the focus on leader-influencing-group-towards-goals has been a core notion for researchers, especially those concerned with the elucidation of leader behaviour. Indeed, one of the main reasons why a decision was made not to present the reader with a catalogue of definitions, and an extended discussion of them, was precisely that it would be of limited use in coming to terms with the research discussed in the later chapters. However, the problems raised by the failure to make fine distinctions between, say, leadership and management, and the implications thereof, will be addressed *en passant*.

Leadership and exchange

The tendency thus far, following the prevalent orientation among researchers, is to refer to leadership as an activity which involves the leader doing something to others, usually subordinates. However, there is a strong case for suggesting that leadership may be a two-way influence process. The work of Hollander is most clearly associated with this idea which he tends to refer to as a 'transactional approach'. In order to be allowed to continue in a position of leadership, the leader must be responsive to the needs of his followers (Hollander and Julian, 1969). In his observation study of a street corner gang, Whyte made the following observation which sheds light on the transactional nature of leadership:

> The man with a low status may violate his obligations without much change in his position . . . On the other hand, the leader is depended upon by all the members to meet his personal obligations. He cannot fail to do so without causing confusion and endangering his position. (Whyte, 1943, p. 257)

Similarly, a study of emergent leaders at Antarctic scientific stations (Nelson, 1964) found that the most liked leaders were those who were motivated to be efficient group members. It is important to bear in mind, then, that leadership is not a one-way influence process and that the leader must be responsive to the group for his position to be viewed as legitimate.

Hollander has recognized that the suggestion that the leader must conform to the wishes of the group and not transgress its norms implies that he can never be innovative in that he is trapped by his need to maintain his position. In order to deal with this conundrum, Hollander proposes an 'idiosyncrasy credit' model. According to this idea, in their early contacts with a group, leaders or prospective leaders gain 'credits' by virtue of the competence they display in connection with the group's primary task, and also their conformity to the group's norms (see, e.g., Hollander, 1978, pp. 40-3). Once a fund of credits has been accumulated the leader is in a position to be innovative and can depart from normal group practice to a certain degree. Indeed, there is a sense in which the leader will be seen as deficient if he does not move in an innovative direction. Hollander (1978, p. 42) cites research which indicates that the leader must not allow himself to fail to meet his role obligations; for example, he must not act in his own self-interest and must be seen as fair.

While Hollander's ideas seem to have been formulated largely in the context of emergent leadership, they are of relevance in the formal organizational context too because they suggest that leaders need to be responsive to their subordinates' needs and wishes. Further, it may provide a framework for the highly neglected issue of informal leadership in organizations, particularly the conditions for its emergence and mainten-ance. However, the idea of leadership as a social exchange has not had a major impact upon researchers who have tended to focus on what leaders do *to* subordinates. An exception to this generalization is the Vertical Dyad Linkage Model (e.g. Danserau, Graen and Haga, 1975) which will be discussed in later chapters. The main thrust of the model is to suggest that the vertical dyads between a leader and each group member become structured at a certain stage, such that there develops an 'in-group' of subordinates close to the leader and an 'out-group' of those who are more distant. Members of the in-group are much more likely to be able to influence the leader than their peers in the out-group. Interestingly, a phenomenon missing from most of these models is any account of leadership in a lateral context. Most of the ideas which have been encountered thus far, as well as the ones to come, perceive leadership in vertical terms, albeit occasionally as a two-way process. Yet it is not in the least difficult to visualize the possibility in a formal organization that leadership relationships may occur among putative equals. To a large extent, this observation harks back to the suggestion that informal leadership is often neglected by researchers. This disregard for leadership in a lateral context in organizations is surprising in the light of the interest among organization theorists in power differentials among sub-units of apparently equal power (e.g. Hickson *et al.*, 1971).

The purpose of the discussion until now has been to introduce the