

# A Brief History of Leadership and Service as an Academic Field of Study

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## ■ INTRODUCTION

Since the beginning of human history, men and women have been obsessed with the notion of leadership. For the earliest of nomadic peoples who followed the herds, identifying qualities of those who might be best suited to lead the hunt was of vital importance because failure might mean starvation and death. The Greeks, Romans, and Mali surely obsessed over what virtues a great warrior leader should possess because failure might mean defeat and enslavement. Leaders have always been entrusted with life and death issues, and they still are to this day. What might happen if the CEO of a Fortune 500 company or a university president miscalculates or makes a big mistake? People might lose their jobs, their homes, their health insurance, and their pensions. Leadership has always been, and it always will be, serious business. Service, at the most basic level, is also keeping others alive, protected, and healthy. Given these facts, it should be no surprise that some of the earliest and most studied texts were about leadership and service—specifically, how one maintains control and thus keeps the group alive.

Hammurabi's Codes, which originated from one of the earliest human civilizations in the Middle East, focused on how to maintain authority and order. Early religious texts likewise took a similar approach to leadership. In Deuteronomy 16:19 (*Holy Bible*, 1994) appointed judges and officers were warned not to “take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.” Very specific guidelines for conduct were clearly spelled out for Hebrew leaders in the religious texts. Punishments for those who broke codes of conduct, what to allow followers to eat as well as which foods to avoid, and how to resolve domestic issues and business disagreements were all spelled out in great detail. To students of today, some of these laws may appear a bit odd, or make no sense at all, but the texts were specifically authored and in line with the

culture of the day in order to maintain accepted societal norms and ensure the success of the leader, as well as the survival of the community of followers.

Some other early texts that focused on leadership offered surprisingly insightful lessons, and several are still used in college classrooms even today. In *The Art of War*, for example, Chinese general and philosopher **Sun Tzu** wrote, in the fifth century B.C., that military leaders stand “for the virtues of wisdom, sincerity, benevolence, courage and strictness” (Tzu, 2003, p. 87). Sun Tzu defined the “consummate leader” as one who “cultivates the moral law, and strictly adheres to method and discipline” (p. 115). Today, *The Art of War* is considered one of the most important works ever written, one that is read in classrooms around the world by students who are preparing for careers in everything from business to coaching and politics. Good advice, apparently, never loses its usefulness.

The virtues of wisdom, sincerity, benevolence, courage, and discipline espoused by Sun Tzu and his Asian contemporaries are still very much a part of modern training in the martial arts, as well as leadership training in general.

Photo by Raymond Screws.



## Leadership Challenge

Identify a leadership quote from Machiavelli, Sun Tzu, Confucius, the Koran, the Bhagavad Gītā, or some other source that inspires you to do all the things you want to do. What about that quote inspires you?

**Niccolo Machiavelli**, Italian diplomat and historian, warned sixteenth-century leaders in his treatise *The Prince* that “the populace is rather fickle; it is easy to persuade them of something, but difficult to confirm them in that persuasion” (1999, p. 25). He noted, however, that one “who builds his power on the people, one who can command and is a man of courage, who does not despair in diversity, who does not fail to take precautions, and who wins general allegiance by his personal qualities and the institutions he establishes, he will never be let down by the people . . .” (Machiavelli, 1999, p. 44). Machiavelli’s writings, however, have been chastised by contemporary critics because he placed considerable importance on staying in power by almost any means, given good intent.

While we may now disagree with some of their basic premises about leadership and service, early writers on the subject played an important role in shaping the discipline. The fact that students at colleges and universities in classrooms around the world are still reading and debating the teachings of Sun Tzu and Machiavelli is a testament to the importance of their writings and teachings. They, and other previously mentioned early writers and philosophers on leadership, worked with others to lay the framework on which modern theories about leadership and service were constructed.

## ■ EVOLUTION OF MODERN LEADERSHIP STUDIES

Perhaps the most difficult problem with the history of modern leadership studies is where to begin—a methodological approach, a definitional approach, a review of the literature, or actual examples or case studies? A methodological approach to leadership is a comprehensive and heuristic attempt that attempts to explain the dynamics of leadership by paying attention to its most significant historical social, political, psychological, and spiritual forces. A definitional approach selects a widely recognized definition of *leadership*, paying close attention to why this definition was historically chosen over others. A third approach might begin with a review of selected historical literature on leadership, such as an ancient text or an old, dust-covered doctoral dissertation. After this review, the researcher might analyze some aspect of leadership theory in historic perspective. A fourth option is to approach the question or “jump into” the research problem by simply choosing leaders most historians would agree were great leaders. The hope, in this instance, is that, some sort of general leadership theory might emerge as one examines lives, times, and challenges.

The first three are deductive approaches to the history of leadership, in that any methodological or definitional approach or review of the literature attends to the particulars first and from them draws some general theoretical leadership concepts. The fourth is inductive, in that it begins with obvious examples of leaders and, in the process of critical comparison, contrast, and historical reconstruction, attempts to draw particular conclusions about leadership. Although there is much merit in these starting points, the best place to begin on the subject of the history of leadership is at the intersection of two widely recognized sociological constructs: authority and legitimacy. From a theoretical perspective, leadership exists only when followers acknowledge and adhere to the leader's authority; otherwise, it is not leadership but something else. At the same time, the compelling force of leadership is highly relational between follower and leader. In other words, followers give authority to a leader, which legitimizes the leader to act for the followers. From a historical and sociological perspective, leadership can exist only in the midst of legitimacy and authority. Absent these two sociological constructs, leadership collapses and chaos ensues or someone else assumes the mantle of leadership.

## ■ LEADERSHIP, AUTHORITY, AND LEGITIMACY

If our perspective has any merit as a prolegomena on leadership theory generally, and as a means to discuss the history of leadership specifically, we actually begin on sociological and theoretical ground plowed before by Max Weber. In his book *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization* (1964), Weber wrote of the linkage among leadership, legitimacy, and authority. Although the focus of his work was leadership within a bureaucratic organization, we are persuaded that his insights on leadership can be generalized to most contexts in which leadership exists.

### Authority

The term **authority** can be defined in several ways. First, it can refer to certain patterns in relationships where one person is expected to direct the behavior of others. An athletic coach is an example. He or she directs the behavior of players. Second, *authority* can refer to the right of someone to direct the behavior of others under certain circumstances. For instance, recently chapter co-author Robert Duffett was late for his daughter's volleyball game and was frantically driving through a neighborhood, looking for the school where the match was to be played. He was not mindful of how fast he was driving his car. Another car, with flashing red lights, pulled up behind him, summoning him to pull to the side of the road. An officer of the law, with badge and pistol in his holster, demanded, nicely, Robert's driving license and vehicle registration. Despite being late, being lost, and speeding, the flashing red lights and uniformed police officer compelled him to pull to the side of the road. If the officer had no badge or gun and drove a car with no flashing red lights or official markings, he would have ignored him. Authority is not limited, however, just to those who possess it in some formal, or titled, manner. It can be the quality of someone's action, as when it is said "She speaks with authority." Martin Luther King's sermons are an example of this way of understanding authority.

Finally, *authority* can refer to persons or groups themselves. Statements such as the following illustrate this type: “You should show respect for authority,” and “He is an authority.” Similar to the previous example, authority is given to certain people due to their role in society. Authority, at least in theory, should never be construed as brute force or power. Rather, it is approved power that is exercised according to norms established between persons and persons, persons and organizations, and persons and society. Weber defined authority as “the probability that a certain specific command (or most commands) from a given source will be obeyed by a given group of persons” (Weber, 1964, p. 324). We may be uncomfortable today with Weber’s autocratic language, yet his point should not be missed. The link between leadership and authority is still about the likelihood of the leader influencing people’s behavior.

### Legitimacy

Historically, a key element in any treatment of the authority of leadership has been **legitimacy**. Legitimacy is the right of an individual to lead that is granted by followers, in both a social and a psychological sense. Weber argues that all leaders must cultivate belief in their legitimacy. Hence, legitimacy and authority are bound together in that leadership authority is grounded in legitimacy (Weber, 1964, p. 325). Most kings throughout human history proclaimed their divine right to rule as God’s chosen representative of the people, and thus ensured their legitimacy.

It is on the basis of legitimacy that Weber argues that all leadership authority is derived from one of three types. Weber recognized that, in reality, these types are usually found in mixed, not pure, form. They explain, in part, why certain individuals become leaders and attract followers, while others do not. These types of authority, in a leadership setting, also say much about followers. Conversely, they also explain how leaders substantiate both their leadership and the devotion of their followers. These three typologies are rational authority, traditional authority, and charismatic authority (Weber, 1964, pp. 324–407).

Rational leadership authority rests on the belief in the “legality of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands” (Weber, 1964, p. 328). Obedience is owed to the legally established impersonal order. Rules and laws are the locus of authority. In its purest form, rational authority is exercised by multiple layers of persons in a bureaucratic organization. A person’s authority derives from the office held, and obedience by subordinates is owed to the office—not the office holder. Relationships are impersonal and there is a clear distinction between the office holder and his or her personal life. The office is the sole, or primary, occupation of the incumbent. Technical rulers govern the workplace. The military and the US court system are examples of rational authority.

Traditional leadership authority rests “on established belief in the sanctity of immemorial tradition and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them” (Weber, 1964, p. 328). Obedience is owed not to enacted laws (rational authority) but, rather, to the person who occupies a position of authority by tradition. Obedience therefore is personal, not impersonal. The authority to

lead in this type is broad and diffuse. Examples of this type vary from kings and fiefs, to chiefs of tribes to certain religious leaders and professions, which are today sometimes outside the realm of rational authority.

Charismatic authority rests on certain individual personality qualities that seem to set the person apart from ordinary men and women. Obedience is therefore owed to the charismatically qualified leader by virtue of his or her perceived supernatural, superhuman, or at least exceptional powers or qualities. Charismatic authority is outside the realm of everyday routine. It is sharply opposed to rational and traditional authority. Charismatic power is thought by followers to come from a transcendent source. Weber borrowed the term itself, *charismatic*, from the vocabulary of primitive Christianity.

Charismatic authority is unstable. It remains only as long as leaders prove themselves by performance. Failure may be interpreted that God has forsaken them. For Weber, the basis of charismatic leadership is not administrative, legislative, or even rational. Rather, its source of power stands seemingly outside the historic nexus of cause and effect. Hence, when they die, the movement will collapse unless the charisma can be transmitted to successive leaders. Weber referred to this as the “routinization of charisma.”

Weber points out a neglected aspect of contemporary leadership theory and a lens to evaluate leadership in historic perspective: Leaders draw their authority from followers and, in the process, establish their legitimacy to continue to lead. This Weberian “lens” can be applied to all arenas of leadership: political, educational, business, and religious.

As history attests, however, revolutions overthrow all types of leaders—traditional, rational, and charismatic. Rational and traditional types of leaders have been known to be both insensitive and oppressive to their followers. The instability of charismatic leadership is clearly demonstrated in the aftermath of the first Great Awakening in pre-Revolutionary America. This religious revival did more to disestablish the state church in the American colonies than anything Thomas Jefferson, David Hume, or Thomas Paine wrote, yet even the revivals of George Whitfield, William Tennant, and Jonathan Edwards that renewed the soul and tore down the Anglican Church in Virginia and Congregational Church in New England petered out. Edwards was even “fired” from his congregation. The charisma could not be routinized.

Weber’s typology forces us to think again about not only the context that gave rise to leadership but also what it is about Martin Luther, John Wesley, John Calvin, and Jonathan Edwards or George Washington, John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, and Martin Luther King that shook the world. What was it about these men and others that elicited loyalty from thousands? Why is it that we still read the writings and biographies about them that are yet being written about their lives and times? What did they do and say that gave them the authority to lead and why did so many follow? Although the Glorious Revolution during the seventeenth century assured the survival of the monarchy in Great Britain, it might be viewed as the forerunner of a shift that began a century later. With the American and French Revolutions during the second half of the eighteenth century, the world began to witness the decline of powerful monarchies. Even in Great Britain, where the monarchy remained influential

during the nineteenth century, especially under Queen Victoria, the elected Parliament gained increasing authority and power. The newly formed United States broke from the shackles of the British monarchy and the French overthrew their king. In America a new form of democracy was fabricated, and in France the unstable situation led to the dictatorship of Napoleon Bonaparte.

Writing during the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville (2000, p. 117) observed “that the power of the president of the United States is exercised only in the sphere of a restricted sovereignty, whereas that of the king in France acts within the circle of a complete sovereignty.” Although France ultimately became a democratic society after Napoleon’s defeat in 1815, Napoleon’s reign heralded the next stage in the evolution of leadership style that became so prevalent during the early twentieth century. In the United States, the emergence of a democratically elected leadership served as the catalyst for a revolutionary inclusive and collaborative democratic tide that swept much of the globe during the second half of the twentieth century.

### ■ LEADERSHIP IN THE NEW AMERICAN DEMOCRACY

One new twist to leadership that was introduced by democracy allowed for the replacement of unpopular leadership in a bloodless and civil manner. In other words, the option and the opportunity for a change of leadership are built into the system. However, the question of term limits for elected officials is debated to this day because some citizens still want to further limit the power of their leaders.

With American independence, with the formation of a democracy, and especially after the creation of the Constitution, the upper echelon of leadership in the United States was not given the same iconic standing by the populace as that previously held by royalty. However, America’s first president, George Washington, was viewed with reverence by Americans. Historian Joseph J. Ellis (2004) titled his book about the first president *His Excellency George Washington*, which indicated that Washington was looked upon as American royalty by the citizens of the young country. Washington seemed like the ultimate leader—almost above reproach—and he still does. Ellis wrote that “Washington poses what we might call the Patriarchal Problem in its most virulent form: on Mount Rushmore, the Mall, the dollar bill and the quarter, but always an icon—distant, cold, intimidating” (Ellis, 2004, p. xi). Although to a certain extent all the well-known founding fathers of the United States are looked upon in an iconic sense, especially Jefferson, it is not to the same degree as Washington. Ellis also explained: “Looking back over two hundred years of the American presidency, it seems safe to say that no one entered the office with more personal prestige than Washington, and only two presidents—Abraham Lincoln and Franklin Roosevelt—faced comparable crises” (Ellis, 2004, p. 188). Unlike Lincoln, however, who faced the Civil War, and Roosevelt, who took on the Great Depression and World War II, Washington tackled the uncertainty of America’s survival as a new country with a more passive, some might say *laissez-faire*, leadership style. But Washington was smart enough to include great minds in his Cabinet, such as Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton, although these two men often disagreed and were political rivals. Tensions mounted between Jefferson and Hamilton, but most

of the time Washington was able to remain above the fray. In one regard, it could be said that Washington helped secure America's future through personal dignity. Although there were presidential elections every four years, Washington chose to relinquish his position voluntarily and not run for a third term, which set a precedent until Franklin Roosevelt during the 1940s. The world was not accustomed to seeing leaders replaced without violence or bloodshed. In this one decision, Washington almost guaranteed that a president would not act as a king and the presidency would not rise above democracy. Today, a constitutional amendment limits a president to two terms.

Although well respected and a founding father, the United States' second president, John Adams, did not carry the same national status as George Washington. He was the first president to be victimized by the new, evolving two-party system, which cost Adams the 1800 election when he lost to Jefferson. Adams, Jefferson, and those who followed were more proactive in their presidential leadership than Washington. With the two-party system, they could not lead passively, or they risked not being reelected. Very gradually, then, and especially into the twentieth century, political leaders at all levels began to make campaign promises, whether they kept them or not, and to become involved in popularity contests to win elections. The result was widespread political corruption, although most politicians were honest. As for Adams, Jefferson, and the other early American presidents, they most assuredly led with the understanding of the importance of establishing a legacy for the new United States: They understood the historical significance of their leadership. David McCullough reasoned that Adams "felt he had lived in the greatest of times, that the eighteenth century, as he also told Jefferson, was for all its errors and vices 'the most honorable' to human nature" (McCullough, 2001, p. 650). This kind of attitude helped John Adams understand the importance of early American leadership for the future of the United States.

## ■ THE RISE OF THE SOCIAL REFORMERS

Not all was perfect in early American history. During most of our history, most of those who held formally recognized positions of leadership were wealthy and all were men. Rich white men, whose wealth was measured by land holdings and property, were the only Americans with the financial means to afford a formal education. Women were rarely allowed an education, and for the poor an education was out of reach. Slaves, male and female, seldom received any education and, like most Americans of the times, were illiterate. Therefore, rich white men were the educated of society, they became the leaders, and they wrote the laws. In addition, in the young United States, propertied white men were the only Americans allowed to vote. Consequently, during the early republic period, America was run by elites and the country was not the democracy we recognize today.

Ironically, some argue that the concept of service has also been historically limited to those who held considerable wealth and status. After all, to be able to give of one's time and money implies that one has resources, in the form of time and money, to give away in service to others. Working single mothers with five children

and two jobs, for example, do not typically have the ability to perform regular acts of service because they must concentrate all of their efforts on their own family's survival. Let's think for a moment about public servants. Do average Americans have the resources to leave their job for two years and run for the presidency? No, of course, they do not, which begs the question "Just how democratic are we, really, if only one of great wealth can be the ultimate public servant in our country?"

Leaders and servants have not always let themselves be limited by societal constraints. Many who assumed the mantle of leader and service have also emanated from outside the political realm in America. During the nineteenth century, especially in the United States, new leaders were borne out of a reaction to social ills in the form of abolitionism and the fight for women's suffrage. These new social leaders included both men and women. Before the nineteenth century, it was rare to see women as leaders in any capacity. One exception was Anne Hutchinson of seventeenth-century Puritan Massachusetts, but she was banished to Rhode Island for heresy. Social leaders such as Sojourner Truth, Fredrick Douglass, Susan B. Anthony, and the Grimké sisters also became prominent. But social leaders faced risks. As historian Alan Trachtenberg argued, abolitionists and other reformers challenged the state, which placed them "outside the nation, to declare themselves antagonists to the corporate entity of American itself" (Trachtenberg, 2007). While this may have been true for whites, African American reformers already endured "outside the nation," and they already faced innumerable and dangerous obstacles. In some cases, these reform-minded leaders and true public servants put their lives on the line for social change.

The very nature of a social good or servant-leadership often means going against the grain of the social norm. Abolitionist Sojourner Truth was not only a former slave and an African American but also a woman. These three facts placed her about as far outside the mainstream of formally recognized leadership and service as possible. But Truth overcame these social obstacles. Although having been born into slavery and raised speaking Dutch, she was freed from bondage when New York abolished slavery, and she learned English, changed her name to Sojourner Truth, and became a remarkable and invaluable servant to others as an anti-slavery leader.

Two more unlikely servant-leaders were Sarah and Angelina Grimké, who fought against accepted norms to become leading abolitionists. Not only did the sisters embark on careers in which women were not respected, but their father was a South Carolina slave owner. During the 1830s, the Grimké sisters challenged the social system by becoming leading abolitionists and public speakers against slavery, at a time when most women were forbidden to speak in public.

Some of the most interesting leaders were those who led rebellions. From leaders of colonial slave revolts to the leaders of the American Revolution, all risked their lives and many lost them. One of the most compelling and successful of the rebellious leaders was Toussaint L'Ouverture. L'Ouverture was born into slavery on the French-held Caribbean island of Saint-Dominique, now Haiti, during the 1740s. He was intelligent and, unlike most slaves, had learned to read and write. In 1800, he led a force of ex-slaves against the French and won. He became the leader of the new independent Saint-Dominique but established a dictatorship, which he thought was best for the new country. Ironically, he was unable to conceive that

the style of leadership, and some might argue public service, he had fought so hard to defeat would be his own downfall. Rubin Blackburn wrote that “Toussaint’s style of rule echoed that of an autocratic and independent-minded colonial Governor—with the difference that he had no Intendant or metropolitan minister to dispute his authority” (Blackburn, 1988, p. 242)—in other words, a dictator. The fact that an ex-slave became the leader of a nation, regardless of leadership style, was extraordinary and destroyed many myths long held about race and leadership. Slavery was abolished in Haiti and L’Ouverture was considered a hero, especially among the leaders of other slave revolts throughout the Americas, but none ever came close to being as successful as L’Ouverture.

### ■ SOCIALIST MOVEMENTS, CAPITALISM, AND NEW APPROACHES TO LEADERSHIP

Out of the ashes of the 1848 revolution, a new form of ideological leadership emerged in Europe. Led by young German philosopher Karl Marx, this new ideology called for revolutionary uprising from the working class of industrial societies. In 1848 Marx and Frederick Engels wrote a pamphlet, known as the *Communist Manifesto*,

German philosopher Karl Marx rejected the notion that religious beliefs should influence government and the organization of society.



that was one of the most influential statements of the nineteenth century, as well as human history. Unlike the American Revolution, and the early US government, in which leadership emanated from the elite, Marx's form of socialism was a revolution of the masses against capitalism. In addition, socialism, and what later became known as Marxism, was purely secular. Marx rejected religion's influence on all matters related to government and the organization of society in general. Historian William A. Green (1998, p. 55) theorized that "Marx disdained concepts of divine intervention, insisting that human action has always been driven by material forces." Socialism, or Marxism, was the final nail in the coffin of faith-driven states in Europe and the leaders who claimed God had divinely selected them by right of birth to lead others. During the second half of the nineteenth century, socialism became popular in Europe, and during the twentieth century its influence spread across Asia.

Although socialist ideology spread rapidly in Europe, it never gained a strong foothold in the United States, in part because democracy was already so entrenched. However, during the late nineteenth century, America experienced an industrial revolution and an explosion of immigrants, both of which helped create a massive poor working class. In response, a working-class movement matured in the form of labor unions. Instead of being socialists, although some had those leanings, the working-class representatives emerged as leaders of labor organizations. Labor unions represented the needs of those exploited by industrialists. After the Civil War, unions were resisted by industrial leaders and violence was common. Labor leaders, such as Uriah Stephens and Terence V. Powderly of the Knights of Labor, led in secrecy as a result, which handcuffed them because it caused distrust and created difficulties when attempting to gain concessions for workers. During the 1880s, the Knights dropped their secrecy, led several successful strikes, and added thousands of members. However, Powderly despised strikes. By 1890, the Knights had lost considerable strength, in part because it had grown too fast and had become too large and difficult to lead.

Unlike the Knights of Labor, which included skilled and unskilled laborers, the American Federation of Labor (AFL), led by Samuel Gompers, consisted of smaller trade unions of skilled workers. The AFL was known as a labor organization that philosophically opposed political involvement. However, historian Julie Greene argued that this simply is not accurate. Greene explained that Gompers and the AFL rejected partisan politics but not political involvement by the organization. However, by 1908, Gompers had begun to change his opinion. Greene (1998, p. 225) wrote that, under Gompers leadership, the AFL "focused its effort on the elite world of lobbying and high-level contacts with Democratic Party leaders." Regardless of philosophy, American labor leaders during the late nineteenth century, as did the earliest leaders of the earliest human societies, represented the most basic needs and the safety of the people they served and represented.

Of course, the rise of labor unions after the Civil War was a reaction to exploding industrialization. Powerful industrial leaders controlled money, people, and often politicians. These leaders were the men who had built modern America, or some would say the men who employed the people who had built America. Known as captains of industry, these men were the most wealthy and powerful leaders in the United States. However, they were also called Robber Barons

because they robbed society for wealth and power. They were not the first businessmen to become wealthy. John Jacob Astor, the first millionaire, earned his wealth in the fur trade during the first half of the nineteenth century. But, during the Gilded Age, American businessmen took wealth and the power that followed to new levels. Men such as John D. Rockefeller, who monopolized the oil industry, and Andrew Carnegie, who was a force in steel, destroyed their competition and exploited the workforce. These men were industrial capitalists, meaning the companies they owned produced products and they answered only to themselves. By the turn of the twentieth century, industry had become controlled by powerful financiers. Investment bankers, such as J. Pierpont Morgan and August Belmont, although not involved in production, became the leaders in the business world, and they worked to make profits for stockholders and themselves. They loathed labor unions and demonstrated little concern for society. Some of these business leaders, nonetheless, participated in some philanthropic and service-related activities—for example, Carnegie gave millions of dollars for public libraries across the United States—but they did very little to supply stable incomes, to provide healthcare, or to feed or clothe those they exploited while amassing their exorbitant wealth.

Many late-nineteenth-century businessmen justified their ruthless actions through a new philosophy called **Social Darwinism**. This theory claimed that it was natural for some people to become leaders and for others to be followers. It was natural selection, Social Darwinists said, that a few people rose to the top of society. In what has become a famous statement, John D. Rockefeller told his Sunday school class that “the growth of large business is merely a survival of the fittest. . . . This is not an evil tendency in business. It is merely the working out of the law of nature and the law of God.” (Corning, 2005, p. 388) Andrew Carnegie (1889, p. 6) explained that, while “the law may be sometimes hard for the individual, it is best for the race, because it insures the survival of the fittest. . . .” These men justified control and exploitation of the poor in a manner not so different from the tyrant kings of ancient times.

However, not everyone believed in keeping down the masses and controlling the less fortunate. In the 1850s, in response to the Know-Nothing Party, which was against Catholics and immigrants, Abraham Lincoln wrote to a friend: “As a nation, we began by declaring that ‘*all men are created equal*.’ We now practically read it ‘*all men are created equal, except negroes*.’” He continued: “When the Know-Nothings get control, it will read ‘*all men are created equal, except negroes, and foreigners and Catholics*.’ When it comes to this I should prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretence of loving liberty” (Lincoln, 1855, p. 323).

Between Lincoln, whose presidency ended with his assassination 1865, and Theodore Roosevelt, who assumed office in 1901, when William McKinley was assassinated, no American president rose above party politics. Instead of being dominated by strong, independent-minded presidents, the American political system was led by political and financial bosses during these three and a half decades. The American two-party system bred corruption and fraud during the Gilded Age. Political bosses gave favors to rich political and business friends in exchange for their support, a practice known as the spoils system. These political bosses followed the straight party line and often set party policy. Other political

bosses ran cities, such as the infamous William Magear Tweed, better known as “Boss Tweed,” who ran New York City through the Democratic Tammany Hall. A virtual machine politician, he controlled the city, and the Tweed Ring was wrought with corruption. Tweed was also in bed with big business, such as the Erie Railroad. Corruption helped take Tweed to the top and helped him maintain his power. However, it also proved to be his downfall. Boss Tweed and his ring were exposed in 1872 for taking kickbacks and robbing the city’s treasury—his political career and graft were over. Despite all the corruption, Tweed’s leadership also benefited the city. “William Tweed had left enormous footprints on his city,” wrote Kenneth D. Ackerman (2005, p. 7), “he had built as grandly as he’d stolen.” Many political bosses combined a positive side with all the dishonesty.

Although political bosses, political machines, and graft did not disappear in the first half of the twentieth century, the United States witnessed a series of strong presidential leaders, such as Theodore Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, and Franklin D. Roosevelt, as well as Lyndon B. Johnson later in the century. As you will learn in chapter seven, women brought new life to the political process as active participants in the system, and with them came the notion that government should serve the people, all people. Theodore Roosevelt attacked the monopolies of the elite, Wilson created the idea of a global community through the League of Nations to protect the world’s citizens, and Franklin D. Roosevelt called for the government to create safety nets for those who were unable to find employment, disabled, too old, or too young to provide for themselves. Johnson sent federal troops into southern states in an attempt to force integration and end segregation.

The democratization of America and much of the world, which began with the American Revolution, eventually allowed the poor, women, and minorities the privileges previously limited to an elite few. We find it difficult to believe today, for example, that less than 100 years ago women were finally given the constitutional right to vote. And don’t forget that African Americans, for example, were not allowed to vote or go to school with whites in some southern states until the early 1970s. Of course, women and minorities had played vital leadership roles throughout human history, but their importance had not always been recognized by the male-dominated power structure, the same one that wrote America’s history. Democratization, as a result, had a dramatic effect on society’s view of those chosen to lead. If men and women were not born with the innate ability to lead, or placed in a position of power by birth as a result of the “will of God,” then what made one a leader? These were questions twentieth-century scholars would begin to ponder at length.

### ■ LEADERSHIP, A NEW ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE

The realization that the difference between the success and failure of an organization can hinge on the behavior of an organization’s leaders while interacting with followers led to an increased interest in the field of leadership research. Unlike some other academic fields, the study of leadership is truly interdisciplinary. As the research evolved during the 1900s, scholars in management, organizational behavior, psychology, history, political science, communication, education, and many other disciplines tried to discover the key to leadership success.

Early research in the field of leadership often focused on what characteristics made someone a great leader. The goal was to try to identify specific characteristics that all great leaders possess. Ralph Stogdill and Bernard Bass condensed the enormous volume of research and data and provided an overview of the findings during the 1940s. Their initial results pointed to a series of traits that allow leaders to experience success. Intelligence, persistence, and sociability are some of the most dominant traits they found in leaders. Physical traits are also said to contribute to one's ability to lead (Northouse, 2007). Later studies tried to isolate individual characteristics and behavioral patterns found in successful leaders. Known as "traits studies," these researchers were unable to produce conclusive results.

Most Americans in positions of prominence in universities at the end of the nineteenth century were veterans of the American Civil War. They had experienced the horrors of poor leadership first hand, not only in the battle field but also in the emerging factories of the rapidly industrializing economies of the world. They were convinced that the battlefield was not the only place one could learn the art of war. They were also convinced that the development of human capital, in the form of leadership, would produce the nation's greatest weapon, educated and prepared leaders.

Jack Shulimson (1993), in his book *The Marine Corps' Search for a Mission, 1880–1898*, noted that the changing political, economic, and technological environment forced the American armed services to institutionalize and standardize education and training programs to meet the challenges created by emerging technology. The Marine Corps, according to Shulimson, was engaged in the "basic search for structure that characterized much of American life during the last decades of the nineteenth century." American business and community leaders of the day, along with military leaders, engaged in a struggle to develop leaders who would meet the needs of an emerging economic and military superpower. The new multinational corporations with thousands of employees and the large, well-equipped armies of the twentieth century created previously unimagined challenges.

Military historian and visiting professor at the United States Military Academy Carol Reardon (1990), argues that US military institutions during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries began placing greater emphasis on leadership—specifically, the role of "intangibles," such as those lessons learned by historical awareness that might reduce the "likelihood of gross misjudgement in battle." Ironically, the American Historical Association, according to Reardon, was critical of the army's disregard for accepted scholarly standards (Reardon, 1990). The conflict described by Reardon would be the first of many between competing disciplines over the emerging field of leadership studies.

In American factories at the beginning of the twentieth century, changes were also beginning to revolutionize leadership in the workplace. The most important early work in the field of management was done by Frederic Winslow Taylor (1997), who attempted to analyze human behavior systematically in the workplace. His model of management was one of a factory machine with interchangeable human parts (workers), each of which performs one specific function. Each action by all parts of the machine is independently evaluated in order to ensure efficiency. His goal was to improve productivity by removing human variability. While Taylor's

approach to management did improve the overall bottom line for corporate America, there was a backlash among workers who resented the dehumanizing effects of the new management system. Workers resented daily production targets and managers hovering over them, watching their every move.

Pioneers of organizational behavior conducted studies in the 1920s in an attempt to determine whether the work environment had an impact on productivity, a novel approach at the time. The best known of these were the Hawthorne Studies, conducted at Western Electric in Cicero, Illinois. The results revealed that organizations are social systems. The workplace environment was one of many variables studied. How people are treated by their bosses, studies revealed, has a tremendous impact on productivity and organizational success. People want to be consulted and feel like part of a team (Weber, 2002). Later research determined that, if properly motivated by the right leadership, employees can be very creative and self-motivated. These obvious conclusions may sound strange to us today, but for most of human history it was believed that workers could not be trusted, were inherently lazy, and could be motivated only by coercion.

James MacGregor Burns, an interdisciplinary social scientist with a Ph.D. in government from Harvard University, forever changed the discussion on leadership when he published what would soon become a standard in the field. His magnum opus, simply titled *Leadership*, was a groundbreaking work. Burns argued that, in order to understand how leaders succeed, researchers must recognize the importance of “collective” motivation (Burns, 1978, pp. 452–53). In short, Burns placed equal importance on the role of both the followers and the leader in organizational success. He approached the study of leadership from a “transformational” perspective. Good leadership, he noted, does not just achieve organizational success; it transforms people’s lives. It is a process that motivates all involved and gives them purpose.

In the late 1980s and early 1990s, researchers were engaged in a more holistic approach to leadership study. Leadership studies, quite simply, had evolved into preparing individuals to make the right choices when called upon to do so. And it was now understood that an individual may be the right individual to lead under one set of circumstances, but not necessarily in all circumstances. The concept of the servant-leader, while by no means a contemporary idea, was also embraced by most leadership scholars after the release of Robert Greenleaf’s seminal work, *Servant Leadership*, in 1977. Today, many college courses include a **service learning** component designed specifically to incorporate hands-on community service as part of the curriculum (refer to Service Learning side bar on page 99 in chapter four).

The study of leadership is an ever-evolving and expanding field. The works of Burns and Greenleaf, while now considered classics in the field of leadership studies, only accelerated the interest in the field of leadership studies. Burns and Greenleaf opened the floodgates for the new theories and paradigms that would continue to emerge well into the new millennium. Since 1980, the study of leadership has become one of the fastest-growing disciplines in the academy. More than 900 universities in the United States now offer a major, minor, certificate, or graduate degree program in leadership studies (Sorenson, 2000). Several universities now offer leadership programs specifically tailored for women and minorities.

## ■ LEADERSHAPE

Jenell Barnard, Contributing Author

LeaderShape family clusters, like this one hosted by CMU, foster a sense of family within the group through self-disclosure, team-building activities, and reflection coordinated by a facilitator.



One of the most widely recognized leadership development programs for young adults, LeaderShape has been committed to helping men and women lead with integrity for over twenty years. Initially conceived in the 1980s by a group of fraternity men at the University of Illinois Urbana–Champaign, as a way to help their fraternity chapter create a vision of the future and an action plan to make their vision a reality, the program was so successful that soon students from across the university were clamoring to attend. Realizing the potential impact of the program, the creators wisely decided to establish a non-profit organization to manage the LeaderShape Institute.

A session of the LeaderShape Institute is comprised of about sixty young adults, a faculty member, and two lead facilitators. Each day of the LeaderShape session is intense and demanding. However, though twelve-hour days may seem intimidating, each is packed with interactive and engaging activities. While much of the instruction occurs with the entire group in the “learning community,” the most intense portions of the program take place within “family clusters.” Cluster Facilitators lead and help foster a sense of family within the group through self-disclosure, team-building activities, and reflection. Their most crucial role is to serve as a vision coach as the students

examine their passions and values to develop bold and compelling vision statements of the world as they would like to see it.

The end product is powerful and the work of LeaderShape graduates can be seen around the world. Ashley Radawski, a graduate of the Central Michigan University LeaderShape Institute, had a vision to help eradicate the dangerous land mines still remaining in Vietnam. As part of her action plan, Ashley focused on individuals who were significantly affected by the late war for support and inspiration. Through a number of fundraising initiatives, Ashley and nine other CMU students participated in a service outreach program in Vietnam. Her commitment led to the reclamation of lands previously riddled with dangerous mines. While in Vietnam, she also helped build playgrounds on lands purchased and made safe by her efforts. This is just one of many such examples of how LeaderShape has changed our world for the better.

LeaderShape's success continues, with students traveling annually from colleges and universities across the nation to the Allerton Conference Center in Illinois. The first campus-based LeaderShape program was held at the University of Michigan in the early 1990s. Since that first session in Ann Arbor, campuses all across the United States have also hosted sessions. In 2007, the first international program was launched in Qatar, followed by sessions in both Mexico and Canada. For more information about the LeaderShape Institute, visit [www.leadershape.org](http://www.leadershape.org).

The International Leadership Association (**ILA**), whose membership consists of scholars, students, researchers, and others who have an interest in the field, was established in 1999. The first ILA conference was held in Atlanta, followed by the 2000 conference in Toronto, Canada, which was attended by 300 participants from across the globe. Within a year of its founding, the organization had hired a two-person staff, an executive director, and a program director (Cherrey & Wilsey, 2007). The organization now hosts meetings and conferences around the world for individuals interested in exchanging ideas and research related to the field of leadership studies.

**Leadership Quarterly** (LQ) and *Leadership Review*, two peer-reviewed academic journals dedicated to the study of leadership, were first published in 1990 and 2001, respectively, in response to increased demand from the academic community. A third publication, the quarterly *Journal of Leadership Studies*, is also a helpful resource for the emergent leader. LQ is affiliated with the International Leadership Association and regularly solicits articles from presenters at ILA conferences. ILA members are also eligible for discounted subscriptions to LQ. *Leadership Review*, an on-line journal available at [www.leadershipreview.org](http://www.leadershipreview.org), is published quarterly by the Kravis Leadership Institute of Claremont McKenna College.

The first hands-on programs designed to prepare individuals for leadership roles, however, were not developed in universities. Most early leadership training programs, as we have already discussed, were developed by industry or the military.

Ironically, one of America's most recognized and successful leadership programs for youth did not have an institutional foundation at all. Inspired by 1952 Nobel Peace Prize recipient Albert Schweitzer, Hugh O'Brian saw a need and wanted to make a difference. The Hugh O'Brian Youth (**HOBY**) Leadership Program, founded in 1958 by O'Brian, who portrayed lawman Wyatt Earp on broadcast television, is perhaps the most respected youth leadership program in the world. Limited initially to young high school males from the Los Angeles area, women joined in 1972, and since 1982 HOBY has offered annual high school leadership seminars for young men and women in all fifty states and in many foreign countries. Seminars hosted by HOBY strive to follow the motto of the organization, which is to teach students "how to think, not what to think." Boasting an alumni base of more than 355,000, HOBY is arguably the largest leadership program in the United States, if not the entire world (*The History of HOBY*, 2007). Similar youth programs, not affiliated with HOBY, have since developed in many states. Young adults ages seventeen through twenty-five can develop their leadership skills through programs such as the LeaderShape. LeaderShape Institutes are intensive educational programs designed to encourage and educate young adults who desire to become extraordinary leaders (refer to the LeaderShape sidebar on page 68).

Actor Hugh O'Brian, founder of The Hugh O'Brian Youth (HOBY) Leadership Program, addresses students at a recent HOBY event.

Photo courtesy HOBY.



Your study of leadership should not end with your college career. Leadership training is a lifelong endeavor. As you move through your life and career, you will probably want to revisit your beliefs and thoughts on leadership. There are thousands of leadership programs available to individuals who want to succeed in the academic, business, or non-profit world. Many cities, for example, offer leadership programs for business and community leaders. Now, more than ever before in human history, the importance of leadership preparation and training is considered a vital part of personal and organizational growth and success.

### ■ KEY TERMS

**Authority**—The right of someone to direct the behavior of others by right of position held within a social structure or hierarchy.

**HOBY**—Hugh O'Brian Youth Leadership Program, which is one of the oldest and largest leadership programs in the world.

**ILA**—International Leadership Association, whose membership consists of scholars, students, researchers, and others who have an interest in the field leadership studies.

**Leadership Quarterly**—An academic journal dedicated to the study and research of leadership. LQ is affiliated with the ILA.

**Legitimacy**—The right of an individual to lead that, in both a social and psychological sense, is granted by followers.

**Niccolo Machiavelli**—The sixteenth-century Italian diplomat who authored *The Prince* and other texts designed to help monarchs be more successful.

**Service Learning**—Educational experience in which students participate in organized community service-related activities for course credit.

**Social Darwinism**—The social theory promoting the belief that nature and natural selection determine who will be leaders and followers.

**Sun Tzu**—The Chinese general and philosopher who authored the *Art of War*.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_



### CHAPTER THREE REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do early writings on leadership differ in focus from more recent texts on the subject? What was their primary objective?

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2. Critics often dismiss Machiavelli because he places considerable importance on staying in power by almost any means if one has good intentions. Do you agree with his philosophy that the “end justifies the means”? Why or why not? Explain.

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3. The findings of Stogdill and Bass pointed to specific traits that allow leaders to experience success. What are two of them? Do you agree that they are important leadership traits? Why or why not? Explain.

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4. Shulimson seems to argue that American business and the US military were driven by economic and political forces to develop leaders that would meet the needs of an emerging economic and military superpower. Do you agree or disagree with his assessment of what has driven modern leadership development? In your opinion, how is his approach different from what drove people such as Hammurabi or Machiavelli to pontificate about leadership development? Explain.

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5. In your opinion, how democratic are we as a society? Do you agree with the assessment of the authors that only the elite, and not the average American, can run for the presidency? Why or why not?

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## CHAPTER THREE SELF-TEST

1. For the earliest of nomadic peoples, identifying qualities of those who might be best suited to lead was of vital importance because failure might mean \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
2. In his book *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, Max Weber wrote of the linkage among leadership, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is the academic journal affiliated with the International Leadership Association that is dedicated to the study and research of leadership.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ was the final nail in the coffin of faith-driven states in Europe and their leaders who claimed God had divinely selected them by right of birth to lead others.
5. The model of management developed by \_\_\_\_\_ was one of a factory machine with interchangeable human parts (workers), each of which performs one specific function.
6. More than \_\_\_\_\_ universities in the United States now offer a major, minor, certificate, or graduate degree program in leadership studies.
7. \_\_\_\_\_, an on-line journal, is published quarterly by the Kravis Leadership Institute of Claremont McKenna College.
8. Military historian Carol Reardon argues that US military institutions during the late nineteenth century began placing greater emphasis on the role of \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The Grimké sisters challenged the social system at a time when most women were forbidden to \_\_\_\_\_ in public.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ is one of the most respected youth leadership programs in the world.