Leadership as a Design Problem

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Abstract

Two assumptions common in leadership research are questioned.
The first is that leadership always matters; the second
that a leader's style should be the critical variable in
leadership research. It is suggested that these assumptions
should be central questions, the answers to which involve
environmental and organizational variables.

The potential in asking different questions is illustrated
by examples of environmental and structural factors which
influence leadership. Because these factors are in part
determined by organizational design issues, leadership can
be viewed as a design problem. Consideration also is
given to how leaders might reduce the demands for personal
leadership of subordinates by restructuring their work
groups. Structural interventions in task, reward, feedback,
and power distributions can serve as "substitutes" for
leadership, and leaders can be viewed as designers.

The paper concludes that leadership is not the sterile
conceptual area that some authors have suggested. Going
beyond leader-subordinate frameworks, considering both
macro and micro approaches, and asking different questions
are promising ways to tackle the elusive leadership concept.

LEADERSHIP AS A DESIGN PROBLEM

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Leadership is not a viable scientific construct.
> (Calder, 1977, p. 202)

. . . the concept of leadership itself has outlived
its usefulness.
> (Miner, 1975, p. 200)

The endless accumulation of empirical data has not
produced an integrated understanding of leadership.
> (Stogdill, 1974, p. vii)

For the past few years, increasing numbers of social
scientists have echoed Calder's (1977, p. 181) sentiment
that the "area of leadership [is] being held in vague
disrepute." Unfortunately, what used to be a leaky bilge
now more closely resembles a fully flooded ship. Defini-
tional ambiguity, narrow conceptual foundations, and an
unceasing stream of contradictory research results have led
some leadership researchers to call for abandonment of the
concept.[2]

Before taking to the lifeboats, however, it is
important to ask if all other alternatives have been
explored. At a minimum we should ask whether the equivocal
research results on leadership are a function of
conceptual sterility or an outcome of asking the wrong
questions.

There are at least two important yet seldom questioned
assumptions underlying most leadership research. The first
is that leadership always matters; the second is that a
leader's personal style (e.g., structure vs. consideration)
should be considered a critical leadership variable.[3]

Questioning the two assumptions raises two relatively new challenges: discovering what determines whether leadership will matter (and if so, how much), and understanding a broader range of what leaders do in organizations (the issue of how do they matter). Pursuit of these challenges will require some shoulder-rubbing between researchers who focus on organizational and environmental characteristics (the organizational designers and theorists) and those who focus on individual and small group behavior (the bulk of leadership researchers).

Both macro and micro approaches can be accused of shortsightedness when it comes to the topic of leadership. Typically, the macro approach postulates that the environment determines the organization's structure which in turn determines the type of leadership required. For example, an uncertain environment leads to a less rigid structure which calls for participative leadership (Lorsch & Morse, 1974, p. 131). While the environmental-organizational interface is treated in a sophisticated way, the variety of leader behavior is unduly limited to a handful of styles vis-a-vis the subordinate group.

The micro approach, on the other hand, has emphasized leader style (again, two or three factors) as they contingently relate to group performance. A major problem with contingency models is their oversimplification of a handful of organizational variables that determine what style should work best--such things as leader position power or structure of the group task. Notice that both the micro and macro approaches assume that leadership matters and that leadership can be described by a few style variables.

Following a suggestion by Scott and Mitchell (1972), I'd like to propose a wedding between the micro and macro approaches in hopes of bringing their complementary strengths to bear on a new set of leadership issues. What the offspring of this marriage might look like is the topic of this paper.

First, I will suggest that there are multiple facets of leadership activity far beyond the style concept. Next, I'll explore how environmental and organizational characteristics might create structures to substitute for personal leadership. Let me emphasize that the ideas presented are intended as prods. No attempt has been made to delineate a complete and polished framework.

Expanding the Leadership Space

The starting point is to find alternatives for the narrow focus on 1) the leader and the follower group and 2) leadership style as a major variable. Because of the lack of agreement on a definition for leadership (Stogdill, 1974; Bennis, 1959), we can choose an approach that is likely to open new horizons rather than limit them. Arbitrarily, then, let's concern ourselves with people who occupy leadership roles in organizations--the executives, administrators, managers, supervisors, and others who bear leadership responsibilities in formal systems. Unlike tautological approaches which define leadership in terms of social influence (more likely a dependent variable than an independent one), the role approach allows us to identify whom we are talking about. Once done, we can describe what people in such roles do before asking how effective they are.

A relatively small but amazingly consistent research literature exists on the activities of formal leaders. A look at studies based on observational and diary techniques (e.g., Mintzberg, 1973; Sayles, 1964; Sayles & Chandler, 1971; Stewart, 1976; Dubin, 1962) reveals that formal leaders spend a great deal of time with people other than their immediate subordinates (usually more than 50 percent). Their activities are far more complex than initiating structure and consideration would lead us to believe. They are acting as figureheads, spokespersons, liaisons, information monitors and transmitters, entrepreneurs, disturbance handlers, negotiators, etc. (see Figure 1). They are involved in numerous non-hierarchical relationships with peers, clients, suppliers, and so on. Their activities are brief, varied, fragmented. A substantial proportion of their activities are initiated by others rather than by the leaders themselves (Mintzberg, 1973).

This variety in leadership behavior will be important as we ask whether or not leadership matters. Environmental and organizational features may well determine the relative importance of the many roles leaders play. In other words, the organization's environment and design 1) create demands for certain leader activities, 2) constrain or enhance how important leaders will be, and 3) determine to some extent whether leaders can be designers. Examining these issues does not require an assumption that environment and organizational structure are causally related. Features of each act directly to influence leadership.

FIGURE 1

A SUMMARY OF MINTZBERG'S ROLES
(adapted from Mintzberg, 1973, pp. 92-93)

A. INTERPERSONAL ROLES

  1. Figurehead   Symbolic head. Performs duties
                          of legal, ceremonial, social
                          nature.

  2. Leader   Motivation and direction of
                          subordinates, including
                          staffing, training, etc.

  3. Liaison   Develops and maintains a net-
                          work of outside contacts used
                          for information and favors.

B. INFORMATIONAL

  1. Monitor   Seeks and receives information,
                          both internal and external,
                          on the organization and the
                          environment.

  2. Disseminator   Transmits information of
                          various types to appropriate
                          members of the organization.

  3. Spokesman   Transmits information on the
                          organization to outsiders; serves
                          as expert.

C. DECISIONAL

  1. Entrepreneur   Searches organization and
                          environment for opportunities;
                          initiates change.

  2. Disturbance Handler Responds to unexpected dis-
                          turbances and crises.

  3. Resource Allocator Allocates organizational
                          resources of all types. Makes
                          or approves significant
                          decision.

  4. Negotiator   Represents the organization
                          at major negotiations; negotiates
                          for resources, etc.

Environmental Impacts on Leadership

A major contribution from the macro approach is reframing the question "To whom does leadership matter?" Instead of looking at leadership effects on subordinate performance, the macro approach has asked how much leadership contributes to organizational outcomes. Salancik and Pfeffer (1977a) found that mayors' control over expenditures was strongly related to the strength of interest groups and to tax sources. Lieberson and O'Connor (1972) found leadership influence constrained by type of industry and by economic conditions. Cohen and March (1974) amplified the impact of organizational type on leadership demands in their study of university presidents. Pfeffer and Salancik (1975) found that leader tenure and other characteristics could be predicted by contextual factors.

These studies are saying that environmental factors, ranging from laws to lobbying, have significant effects on whether and in what ways leaders have an effect. Such results have generated explanations of why leadership seems to matter more than it actually does (see the attribution explanation in Calder, 1977, and Pfeffer, in press).

One way environmental factors affect leadership is by determining who gets power in organizations and how power distributions change over time (Porter, 1976; Salancik & Pfeffer, 1977b). There is evidence that power accrues to organizational members who interface with critical environmental forces. To that extent, leaders in strategic parts of the organization will matter more because of their organizational influence and the centrality of their function. Further, where the organizational environment creates power struggles, leaders who can direct the energy devoted to political battles will be critical.

Defining power relationships is not the only way uncertainty/instability in an organization's environment influences leader impact. As environments become increasingly complex, the information-processing demands on leaders increase. The importance of the informational roles (Mintzberg, 1973) increases and with it dangers of superstitious behavior, undue confidence in early trends, and failure to integrate information (Slovic, 1972). Clearly environmental uncertainty, through its informational demands, creates a need for particular leader skills. To the extent leaders have to cope with complex information, they will matter more.

Environmental instability also affects leadership through its impact on job stress. There is evidence that when job stress is low, leader consideration is related to group satisfaction and performance. When stress is high, leader structuring is more effective (Schriesheim & Murphy, 1976). Evidence is sketchy, but it seems reasonable to suggest that levels of job stress will influence the importance of other leadership roles. For example, stress is related to information processing (Schroder, Driver, & Streufert, 1967) and therefore likely to impact on informational roles leaders play.

Environmental characteristics also influence leadership by determining many of the problems leaders will have to confront. Leader time frames (Vaill, in press), the density of ill-defined, ill-structured problems (Mitroff, in press), and the types of incongruities to be interpreted (McCall, 1977b) all rest heavily on the forces acting in the organization's environment. Ill-defined problems change the nature of the decisional roles leaders play, as do problems with short time frames. Whether ill-defined problems enhance or neutralize leader importance is an open question. On one hand, the more random the environment the less likely that leaders can do much about it. On the other hand, random environments present rich opportunities for leaders who can interpret them.

Organizational efforts to gain control over their environments (Starbuck, 1976) suggest other ways that leadership might be affected. Stewart (1976) has shown that the basic activity structure of managerial jobs varies according to interconnectedness with the environment.

In summary, the environment of the organization can directly affect leadership by constraining what leaders can do and by determining which leadership roles will be most critical to the organization. Whether leadership can matter, how much, and in what ways is a function of environmental factors. Leadership researchers need to acknowledge in their models the importance of environmentally relevant leader roles--roles that go far beyond leader-subordinate relationships. At the same time, macro researchers need to recognize that the objective environment may differ from the perceived environments leaders (and organizations) respond to (Starbuck, 1976; Weick, 1969). Leadership may matter because leaders create or deny uncertainty for others in their organizations. The consequences of inconsistency between reality and perception deserve further study.

Organizational Design and Leadership

If the external environment has impacts on leaders, then certainly the internal structure does too. The organization's design features mediate the environment for leaders by determining who gets what information, in what form, and so on. The structure of the organization and its formal processes, and the leader's relationship to them, also provide a direct stimulus for leader behavior.

Whereas the environment may be difficult and sometimes impossible to control, structures and processes are subject to rational design, though many organizations are structured by history and chance rather than by design. This means that the degree to which leadership will matter and the ways in which it will matter should be part of the design decisions. A fundamental decision must be made, for example, on whether to design organizations for the "average" leader or to design them for above-average leaders.

Making design decisions about leadership involves an intensive look at environmental constraints. Such decisions also require conscious deliberation over what leadership should mean to the organization. It is theoretically possible to design a structure in which leadership will matter very little. This is what the bureaucratic model is all about. It is also possible to design structures which place considerably more importance on individual leaders. As leaders matter more, the success or failure of the organization relies more heavily on individual skills and abilities.

At a very simplistic level, organizations designed to contain rigid and centralized hierarchies, formally specified duties, highly detailed policies and procedures, etc., will greatly constrain potential leadership contributions. In Katz and Kahn's (1966) terms, most leaders will be administering--using existing structure rather than originating or interpolating it. Their skill requirements will focus on "technical knowledge and understanding of [the] system of rules" (p. 312). The chance for leadership to make much difference will be restricted to relatively few leadership positions at the top of the organization. Organizations structured in opposite ways, "organic" if you will, should be much more dependent on a wide range of leader positions and actions. The ability of leaders to gain system and subsystem perspective, to act in place of formal structure, and to exercise individual judgment will be critical. The organization may succeed or fail on the basis of its leaders' actions.

The intuitive appeal of global hypotheses about structural effects is great, but what data are available on how specific organizational features relate to leadership? Unfortunately, not much direct evidence exists, although many inferences can be drawn.

For example, how does formalization of structure and process constrain leader behavior? Steven Kerr (1976), argued that formal rules and procedures neutralize the effects of leader structuring but not of consideration. Sayles and Chandler (1971) in their study of NASA found that specified standards predetermined managerial decisions. Stewart (1976) and Kerr (1976) concurred that formalized rules, procedures, and so forth drastically reduce the possibility of leader delegation.

But structural features operate in other, more subtle ways. Managerial selection processes tend to restrict the range of leader behavior possible (Pfeffer, in press). Similarity with existing management seems to be one criterion for advancement, insuring that a certain narrow range of leader action is available. Anecdotally, such inbreeding is a severe problem in some organizations, but researchers have neglected this as a leadership issue.

Another structural feature reported to reduce leader impact (again anecdotal, but intuitively compelling) is the policy of rapid management movement. In some organizations the average tenure of managers in any one position is less than two years. While little research has been done on the implications of this, it seems quite probable that real impact on the organization takes more time than policy allows.

Perusal of a variety of references yielded the following additional examples of structural effects on leadership:

1) The greater the functional interdependence of organizational units, the greater the need for leader skills in negotiating and bargaining (Sayles & Chandler, 1971). Further, a fundamental design decision--whether the organization will be functional, divisional, or matrix-- creates different role demands on leadership positions. Project managers, for example, have to be politically astute and good at negotiating with non-hierarchical others (Sayles & Chandler, 1971). This is probably less true for managers in divisional structures where authority relationships are more clearly defined.

2) Geographic isolation of subunits changes leader-
ship demands. Barnowe's (1975) study of scientists showed
that leadership matters more when the scientists are isolated
from the scientific community. Most large organizations are
geographically dispersed, meaning that many leaders are not
physically located with the people they lead. This certainly
must create some unique demands. At a minimum it requires
strategies for management in absentia.

3) It has long been argued that access to information
and resources is a prime determinant of organizational
power. To the extent that such access is specified by
formal policies or systems, the design of the organization
will determine which leadership positions will have the
most potential influence over organizational outcomes. If
high influence leaders, as determined by structure, are
not the people dealing with critical environmental con-
tingencies, leader impact on organizational outcomes will
be reduced.

4) The visibility of managerial jobs is another
design dimension likely to affect leader behavior. When
a job incumbent's performance is clearly visible to others,
there is pressure not to make mistakes (Sayles & Chandler,
1971). Responses to job visibility and the accompanying
stress often take the form of "playing it safe" (Stewart,
1976; MacKinnon, 1975). Research on the visibility of
managerial jobs is limited, but what does exist raises
important questions for researchers, e.g., do highly visible
aspects of the leader's job get unwarranted attention,
while less visible aspects are neglected?

5) Kamens (1977) has argued that organizations are
bestowers of symbols. Such symbols provide legitimating
rights, create membership categories, and certify people
as members of those categories. The "carpet-on-the-floor,
wooden-desk" phenomenon is one way of symbolically acknowledg-
ing the relative importance of a manager. Effective use of
symbols may free leaders from having to convince others of
their "right-to-lead." The organizational chart, a dramatic
symbol of leadership authority, provides an example. Dotted
line relationships on organizational charts create symbolic
confusion by fuzzing authority lines. When there are several
bosses, which ones do subordinates listen to? The meanest?
The nearest? The nicest?

6)   The way a task is structured has significant
effects on the motivation of job holders (Hackman, 1976).
While most studies of task effects have concentrated on
non-leadership positions, such things as meaningfulness,
responsibility, autonomy, feedback and so forth are im-
portant for leaders, too. We often assume that management
jobs, by their very nature, are high in motivating
potential. This assumption deserves testing. The content
of a managerial job is related to the nature of the jobs
beneath it. Stewart (1976) argued that job enrichment for
workers may mean job impoverishment for managers. Kerr
(1976) postulated that unambiguous, methodologically in-
variant, and feedback-rich tasks neutralize leader structur-
ing behavior. Instrinsically satisfying tasks neutralize
the effects of leader consideration. Thus, critical
research issues surround the design of both leadership
and non-leadership tasks--the motivation of leaders as well
as the need for them to motivate their followers is intimately
related to the structure of the task.

In summary, this discussion of the relationship be-
tween organizational characteristics and leadership has
covered ten areas: formalization, standards, selection,
management movement, task interdependence, geographic
dispersion, information and resource control, visibility,
symbols, and job structure. These factors by no means
exhaust either the range or depth or organizational
influences on leadership processes. They are sufficient,
however, to document the importance of including such
factors in future research on and conceptualizations of
leadership. These design features are likely to change the
emphasis leaders can or should place on the various roles
they play in the organization.

Perhaps the most important leadership implication of
design decisions is the power conferred on leaders to act
as designers of their units. Traditionally, a leader's
style or behavior has been highlighted relative to his or
her impact on the subordinate group. The leader is held
accountable for the motivation, satisfaction, and perform-
ance of the subordinates. Most training efforts try to
help leaders learn to behave in optimal ways to enhance such
outcomes--putting the burden for group outcomes squarely on
the personal action of the leader.

This emphasis on personal leader responsibility for
the group may be unfair, unrealistic, and counterproductive.
Thus far in this paper it has been argued that leaders in

organizations engage in many roles, not all of which involve subordinates. The relative importance of these other roles will be determined by the environment and the organization, but it seems safe to guess that they often outweigh subordinate-focused roles.

In the next section it is suggested that many leadership activities involving the follower group can be handled by structures rather than by the leaders themselves. To the extent that leaders design their groups appropriately, they can free themselves for other roles.

Leaders as Designers

The basic issue is to find substitutes for personal leadership of the follower group. With sufficient authority (usually vested by the organization) leaders can build substitutes through (1) influence over the basic composition and structure of the group, (2) contingent distribution of rewards, (3) control over feedback, and (4) selective sharing of formal power. Use of substitutes represents an effort to create "self-managing work groups" (Hackman, 1976) or "self-focusing, self-enforcing" systems (Sayles & Chandler, 1971).

Composition and structure of the group. Hackman (1976) pointed out that some work groups can be essentially self-managing if the work is meaningful, the job holder is responsibile for the product, and if there is performance feedback. Achieving these states requires at least three design elements: design of tasks, composition of the group, and establishment of group norms. Task design is obviously important, for it is the nature and structure of the work that allows meaningfulness, wholeness, and feed-back. But as Hackman pointed out, not all people respond favorably to enriched, meaningful jobs. Composition of the group, therefore, is a critical factor. First, group composition will determine whether the skills and abilities needed to do the work are present. Second, composition will be an essential ingredient in responsiveness to the concept of enriched jobs.

Kerr (1976) hypothesized that certain characteristics of subordinates can substitute for leadership. For example, if the subordinates are able, experienced, trained, or know-ledgeable, leader structuring is neutralized. If subordinates

are professionals, consideration is neutralized. And
finally, if subordinates are indifferent toward organizational
rewards, both structuring and consideration are neutralized.

The third design element in self-managing work groups--
the establishment of self-supporting norms--is more nebulous.
Nonetheless the leader can contribute to norm development
through modeling, retranslation of history (Vaill, in press),
and symbols.

Clearly much remains to be learned about self-managing
work groups. Enough is known, however, to strongly suggest
that many motivational actions expected of leaders can be
accomplished by structural intervention.

Contingent distribution of rewards. Leaders as
manipulators of reinforcers has been a major thrust in
leadership research. From the need-based expectancy models
to the recent incursion of operant conditioning approaches,
leaders have been seen as critical reward mediators for
their subordinates. Unfortunately, enormous time would be
required for a leader to identify each subordinate's
meaningful rewards, attach these rewards to appropriate
behavior, and consistently administer rewards over time--
even if it were possible to do so. Again, it seems that
substituting structural elements for personal mediation
would be useful. Sims (1976) has suggested that many rewards
can be distributed by peers, clients, the task itself, and
the organization. DeVries (1976) has documented a classroom
structure in which a structured reward system is a critical
element.

Rewarding desired individual performance is a major
leadership responsibility. Much more research is needed
to help leaders design reward systems that are not totally
dependent on personal mediation by leaders. Managers spend
relatively little time with individual subordinates and
are often not present when "desired behavior" occurs.
Design of self-supporting reward systems is an exciting
option.

Control over feedback. Providing feedback to subordinates
is another obligation usually placed on a formal leader. In
most organizations feedback is formalized in a performance
appraisal system requiring the boss to hold an interview
with each subordinate. In addition, leaders are expected to
provide rich performance feedback on a day-to-day basis.

As is the case with administering rewards, providing sub-
ordinates with valid, timely, rich feedback is an
extremely difficult job. Personal mediation of feedback by
leaders can easily reduce the time and energy available
for other important roles. Structural interventions
should relieve leaders of some of the feedback burden.

Sayles and Chandler's (1971) observations on the effects
of interpendence and visibility suggest two such inter-
ventions. If units or individuals are interdependent,
lagging performance by one party is likely to stimulate
immediate feedback from the other. Where task interdependence
is impractical, it may be possible to increase job visibility.
The more important-others viewing the behavior or product,
the more likely the performer will receive feedback without
leader intervention.

Another design challenge is building feedback into
the job itself. This is an important element in self-
managing work groups (Hackman, 1976), and task feedback is
highly valued by recipients (Greller & Herold, 1975).

Selective sharing of power. For a variety of reasons,
including organizational constraints and a lack of solid,
how-to-do-it knowledge, leaders will not always be able to
(or want to) design substitutes for personal mediation.
By their choice of lieutenants and the formation of
coalitions (Lundberg, in press), leaders can disperse personal
mediation among others. This is not a generalized strategy
of participative management; rather, it represents a means
of freeing the leader's time by delegating to carefully
selected subordinates.

Mintzberg (1973) argues that all formal leaders engage
in all ten managerial roles (though emphasis on particular
roles will vary). A designing leader might assess which
roles best fit his or her interests and skills, then find
subordinates to help with the others.

A hypothetical formal leader might enjoy and be good
at dealing with information, supervising, and handling
disturbances. Roles involving representing the unit
(e.g., figurehead, spokesman, negotiator) might be delegated
to a subordinate skilled in those activities.

In sum, group structure, rewards, feedback, and power
are all areas in which leaders can use design strategies to
free themselves for other activities. Other examples no
doubt abound. But can structurual leadership strategies

really work? While there is little conclusive evidence
on leadership directly (the question has not been asked
very often), there are some supportive data.

Teams-Games-Tournament (TGT), a classroom structure,
uses a carefully designed combination of group structure,
rewards, and feedback to enhance learning. A series of
rigorous field experiments have documented the positive
effects of these structures on learning, attitudes, and race
relations (DeVries, 1976). Further, the effects held up
even when teachers were randomly assigned, indicating that
the TGT structure successfully withstood individual dif-
ferences among teachers. Like the design strategies
suggested for leaders, the TGT structure does not replace
teachers. It allows them to concentrate their energies
on putting real substance into a structure that works.
Further, TGT is a supplement to ordinary classroom activities,
thereby giving teachers an additional tool for doing their
jobs.

The point is not to sell TGT but to suggest that
leaders thinking like designers and equipped with
structural tools can also free some energy to tackle
critical problems. Identifying structures that can aid
leaders represents a new focus for both micro and macro
leadership researchers.

A final note: There is a fundamental paradox to
resolve before leaders can be effective designers. The push
to make organizations leader-proof through formalization
and standardization takes away the discretionary power leaders
need to build effective substitutes. Because individuals
vary in their competence, organizations designed to maximize
leadership effects run the risk of sinking with poor
leaders. Formalization, however, reduces the range of
leader behavior available to cope with environmental changes.
Further, standardization, rules, and procedures reduce the
possibility of a self-managing management.

Of Leaders, Designers, and Researchers

This odyssey began with some pessimistic statements
about the results of leadership research. It ends with a
note of optimism based on the following observations:
(1) Much of the sterility of which leadership research is
accused is a product of asking the wrong questions. It
is not at all clear that the concept itself is empty.

(2)   In spite of some myopia by both organizational
theorists and leadership researchers, enough work already
exists to surface important and relatively unexplored
aspects of leadership. It is all the more exciting be-
cause the promising areas lie in regions requiring com-
bined macro and micro approaches. (3) By broadening the
definition of leadership--using a framework based on what
leaders actually do--it is possible to ask about the ways
leadership matters. Characteristics of the environment,
the organization, and the individual leader can act to
constrain or enhance the leader's ability to carry out
the various roles. In many cases these characteristics
will be complex and contradictory. It is in this rich
complexity that research on leadership stands to move
forward. It is in failing to confront this complexity that
leadership research can be faulted.

If successful, this paper has illustrated that an
organization's environment and design can influence the ways
and degree to which leadership matters, what leadership
activities will be most important, and the leader's latitude
to design. It has also illustrated ways leaders can use
structure to free their time for activities other than
motivating, rewarding, and controlling. Unfortunately,
the illustrations do not provide a consistent or complete
framework for addressing leadership issues. They may,
however, prod us to ask different questions, to look at
the phenomenon in different ways, and perhaps to begin study-
ing leadership as the interdisciplinary problem it really
is.

The impact of leadership is not totally determined by
environmental/organizational constraints or by the
individual leader. The implication is simply that leader-
ship itself is a significant design issue. Through their
design features, organizations can constrain or enhance
leadership contributions. Through their awareness of
design features, leaders can gain some control over the
varied demands placed on them.

Footnotes

[2] A critique of leadership research amplifying these themes can be found in McCall, 1977a.

[3] The first assumption has been addressed by Pfeffer (in press) and Kerr (1976). The second assumption has come under increasing attack by numerous authors (see, for example, McCall & Lombardo, in press).

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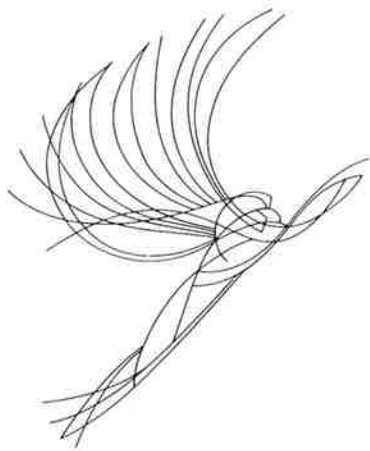Greensboro, North Carolina 27402-1660
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