Leadership in the Eye of the Beholder: Working toward Better Decision-Making in Libraries

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abstract: Much of the literature in library leadership and management focuses on strategies and practices based on discrete attributes and sweeping human behaviors intended to improve operational effectiveness. This paper challenges the reader to build a mindset for leadership that reflects the real world, where leaders and managers work within parameters often contradictory and at times unconventional. It acknowledges the complexities of leadership in terms of decision-making and judgment within the culture of the organization rather than standard characteristics seen as desirable in a leader. The distinction between leadership and management is also examined.

Introduction

Leadership and management have been studied extensively over the years, with many observations and conclusions emerging to tell the story of how leaders and managers positively impact their workplaces. For libraries, it is no different. The literature includes a range of analyses related to what library leadership and management is (and is not) and how leaders and managers can be effective. Despite the exhaustive research and writing in this area, a clear and decisive definition of leadership has not yet emerged.[1] Furthermore, the distinction between the terms *leader* and *manager* remains vague and elusive.[2]

This paper will focus on the inherent contradictions between many of the leadership assertions in the literature, with an eye toward uncovering a practical way of understanding leadership and management in libraries. Some of the conventional thinking about how leaders can be successful will be challenged, but more importantly, the role and disposition of the leader will be reviewed with a consideration of how they can best

manage the cultural forces at play as they carry out their administrative responsibilities. In other words, why is it so difficult to be a library leader and manager, and what type of mindset do the people in these positions need to better navigate the cultural landscape and make more positive decisions?

Literature Review

Defining Leadership, or Not

It is said that beauty is in the eye of the beholder. The same applies to leadership.[3] The qualities and virtues associated with leadership can vary widely depending on the observer's values. That is, qualities that appeal to one person may not appeal to another.[4] To help understand this better, Keith Grint lays out four domains for how leadership is often defined: "person, result, position, and process."[5] The *person* domain associates leadership with personal traits such as honesty, integrity, confidence, humility, transparency, modesty, charisma, credibility, and reliability, to name a few.[6] Even being taller and better dressed has been linked to positive attitudes toward leadership ability.[7] These attributes are often associated with leadership, but as we look closely at exceptional leaders, in the present and throughout history, we see many contradictions. More than a few American presidents have been known to be deceitful and inspired by selfish motives.[8] Even "Honest Abe" Lincoln, generally considered one of America's most virtuous presidents, was known not only for his occasional lies but also for losing his composure at times with a flare of arrogance and impatience.[9] Numerous successful chief executive officers, such as Steve Jobs (Apple), Jeff Bezos (Amazon), and Bill Gates (Microsoft), have been reported to have significant imperfections in how they treat others, especially subordinates.[10] When it comes to honesty, Jeffrey Pfeffer argues that leaders commonly lie in the workplace because, ultimately, "they seldom face serious consequences." He cites research supporting how falsehoods can be used to advance careers and improve negotiations. In short, he writes, "Everyone lies—the typical leader just does so more frequently and with fewer risks of detection." Pfeffer observes that at times behavior "congruent with universal religious and human values" that is used to espouse effective leadership simply is not effective. He says, "There are occasions when you have to do bad things to achieve good results."[11] Thomas Cronin and Michael Genovese add, "Elements of calculation, abrasiveness, manipulation, and egoism are endemic in positions of authority. But a leader must also be able to consider people in the wholeness of their lives, not just getting a job done or as a means for enhancing the bottom line." They go on to say, "Thus leaders have to choose between democratic and autocratic styles, and how open or secretive, how honest or cunning, they should be in a particular situation. Much depends on their community's accepted values. Yet even within a culture or communities, there are marked variations in how leaders wrestle with this dilemma." Overall, leaders often face choices that move them back and forth between good and evil, so they must "strike a balance that weighs on the side of good."[12]

The *result* domain deals with the way people view leaders in terms of success in their areas of responsibility. Effective leaders achieve positive results, or conversely, "without results there is little support for leadership."[13] This can be a blessing and a curse because

leaders may get credit for positive outcomes having little to do with their efforts, or they may become the scapegoat for negative circumstances outside their control.[14] A common example is the library administrator who receives praise for grant revenue brought in by their subordinates or the baseball manager who is fired when the team's performance is below expectations.[15] If the organization is performing effectively, the leader is assumed to play a part in the success. Conversely, the same assumption is often made for dysfunction.

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The *position* domain refers to a leader's authority and responsibility to impact subordinates by controlling budgets, hiring, firing, or performing other administrative functions. Their position establishes the leadership role in the organizational structure as a formal delegation of duties to be carried out as defined by their leaders, instead of based on personal traits or behaviors. A leader in the position domain does not necessarily need to be the highest-ranking authority or colleague, and there may be numerous leaders throughout the organization who have emerged largely by means of their position, but leadership does, for some followers, represent a compromise in autonomy.[16] Martin Blom and Mats Alvesson acknowledge the contradiction between leadership and autonomy, saying, "While one cannot argue that leadership always includes significant constraints, or that most people would prefer a work situation entirely characterized by discretion and free of limiting structures, the very idea of leaders leading followers and followers following leaders arguably involves a reduction of autonomy."[17] As a result, in many workplaces a balance is needed to receive the benefits of leadership while minimizing the "conflict" and "tension" it imposes on autonomy.[18]

The final domain, *process*, includes leaders who have emerged through the process of leading.[19] Grint suggests this is an "inverse learning" process where the leader learns their craft by means of their followers, much as a parent learns from their children.[20] By listening and learning from their followers, leaders discover how to be leaders. If leadership can be learned, can it be taught? Over the past decades, a multibillion-dollar industry centered on teaching leadership skills has emerged, but there is criticism that significant improvement in leadership has not been realized over that time.[21] Grint argues, "Although many leadership experts insist that we can learn to lead, or at least learn some aspects of the process of leadership, this does not necessarily mean that leadership can be taught."[22] Dov Frohman and Robert Howard go further by saying, "Leadership isn't easy; it's difficult, necessarily difficult. And the most essential things about it cannot really be taught—although, in the end, they can be learned."[23] Regardless of who may or may not be teaching and learning between leaders and followers, the process domain involves the ways the leader develops and refines their leadership talents.

In all, these four domains provide a cognitive structure useful in thinking about leadership, but this framework is just one of many; a complete analysis of all the models is beyond the scope of this paper. In the real world, each domain may exist in various degrees, intermixed with others. A successful leader most likely benefits from factors associated with more than one domain.

A broader, more universal definition of leadership focuses on *influence*, the ability to acquire followers.[24] In simplest terms, leadership does not exist without followers. Mary Uhl-Bien, Ronald Riggio, Kevin Lowe, and Melissa Carsten suggest the role of followership in the leadership process has been underestimated.[25] Traditionally, leadership has been the focus of the leader-follower relationship, but for leadership to be effective, leaders and followers need to contribute cooperatively. In other words, leading and following together will deliver successful leadership.[26] Barbara Kellerman defines followership in two parts: rank and behavior.[27] *Rank* refers to the follower's position and authority within the organizational structure, where *behavior* is about followers who go along with the leader voluntarily. Of course, rank and behavior are not necessarily mutually exclusive forms of followership, and the degree one or the other exists is relative to the observer. It is possible, as well, due to the "individual differences among followers," that a leader's role and influence may be accepted by some and rejected by others.[28]

The notion that influence is a predicate for leadership has its critics. Since influence, practically speaking, is an element of virtually every social interaction, it "does not say much" about what leadership is.[29] John Maxwell writes that everyone is a leader in some fashion, and it may fluctuate depending on the situation and group dynamics.[30] But if we cannot articulate a more specific definition of leadership than mere influence, we will be hard-pressed to develop our understanding beyond individual cases in specific contexts.[31] In other words, "leadership theories and studies lack clarity" because if "everyone is a leader no one is." Put another way, "leadership is everything and nothing."[32]

Cronin and Genovese describe the paradoxical expectations imposed on leaders and why leadership roles are so challenging:

> We yearn for self-confident, tough-minded heroic leadership yet are also inherently suspicious of it. We at times desire decisive hierarchical leaders yet later wish to be left alone. We want leaders who are like us yet better than us. We yearn for leaders to serve the common good yet simultaneously serve particular interests. We lament the lack of leadership, yet we often get upset with them when they do.[33]

These conflicting expectations often put leaders in a no-win situation. Managing contradictions around conflict and complacency can be especially difficult. Cronin and Genovese write, "Compromise and patience may be required in one situation, yet too much compromise or patience in other situations may be fatal." They go on to say, "Leaders need to unify their organizations or communities through effective negotiation and alliance building, yet leaders also have to stir things up and jolt their organizations out of complacency. In short, we ask them to be uniters *and* dividers."[34]

The contradictions in the literature describing leadership go so far as to question its actual existence.[35] Is leadership really "a thing" or merely an ideal created in our minds to justify an illusion?[36] Decades of research and writing have yielded little practical evidence beyond "we know it when we see it."[37] Comparable to love and power, leadership exists in an abstract form, yet we talk about it as if we understand it completely. Michelle Bligh, Jeffrey Kohles, and Rajnandini Pillai cite James Meindl and Sanford Ehrlich, who "argued that leadership may be more illusionary than real…that followers may attribute performance to leaders simply as a function of them being labeled as leaders."[38] Alvesson and Stefan Sveningsson state, "It is difficult to say anything of the

possible existence of leadership in the great majority of organizations and management situations."[39] Marcus Buckingham and Ashley Goodall question the circular reasoning behind the existence of leadership: "There's a thing called leadership, and we know it's a thing because leaders have it, otherwise they wouldn't be leaders."[40]

Leadership or Management?

The ambiguity of leadership also makes it difficult to distinguish from management, although there seems to be general agreement in the literature that there is a difference.[41] Management is said to be inward looking, focused on the regular operational routines that make an organization function. Leadership, on the other hand, is outward looking, concentrating on the future and how strategic changes might advance the team or organization.[42] But this conventional understanding is clouded with considerable overlap between what leaders and managers really do. Blom and Alvesson say that "leadership seems to cover everything that managers do—and thus nothing specific."[43] Roles defined explicitly as leadership almost always contain elements of management and vice versa. Most library leadership roles include responsibilities of budgeting, planning, change management, risk-taking, and defining a vision—all defined as managerial competencies by the Gallup Organization.[44] Just the same, many managerial positions include expectations to build trust, determine objectives and strategies, organize activities and duties, share new knowledge, motivate, and develop skills—all identified by Sue Roberts and J. E. Rowley as within the leader's "sphere of influence" over followers.[45] In reality, the ratio of leadership versus management responsibilities in most positions will likely be fluid, day to day and hour to hour. Micha Popper cites studies that suggest leadership as "just one of the manager's roles," acknowledging that the strengths of a manager may lean either way, toward leadership or management. He even speculated that "too much leadership" could be a detriment in the workplace.[46] John Storey and Graeme Salaman, in their book *Managerial Dilemmas: Exploiting Paradox for Strategic Leadership*, deflect the leadership/managership question by writing, "There is a long-standing debate about the possible distinctions between leadership and management and it is not one we intend to revisit here."[47]

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Cultural Considerations

One of the most essential aspects in understanding the nuances of leadership is organizational culture.[48] The role culture has in organizational performance, however, is defined many ways.[48] The specific meaning rests in the eye of the beholder. Alvesson writes that culture is "a tricky subject as it is easily used to cover everything and consequently nothing. That certain researchers are interested in 'culture'—or at least use the term—

does not mean that they have very much in common."[49] And Popper says, "It appears that culture is a kind of genetic code that is universally recognized as important but it lacks the substantiality that permits biologists, for example, to study it."[50] In general, organizational culture is "a pattern of shared basic assumptions learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, which has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems."[51]

Whatever the specific definition of culture, library leaders are part of it and must consider the operational dynamics among personnel as they push for change and reimagine how libraries remain relevant and prepare for the future.[52] A conservative culture can be a barrier for leaders with a bold vision of innovation and change.[53] Just the same, a healthy organization will push back on leaders heading down the wrong path.[54] The obvious challenge is deciding when to move forward with an idea and when to hold tight.

Laszlo Bock points out the significance of organizational culture with the statement "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." He shares that for Google, its "culture matters most when it is tested." When major challenges emerge, its culture drives them toward a solution.[55] The company even has a dedicated position titled "chief culture officer."[55] Buckingham and Goodall, however, see the traditional construct of culture a little differently. They suggest culture, as commonly understood, is not useful. Instead, they believe focusing on local team experiences provides a more practical representation of how employees engage with one another. They argue that workers observe and understand how their immediate circle of colleagues (the team) affect their work but extrapolating that insight more broadly or across the entire organization is too abstract and not meaningful. "When you're next looking to join a company," they say, "don't bother asking if it has a great culture—no one can tell you that in any real way. Instead, ask what it does to build great teams."[56]

Decision-Making

An important outcome of library leadership and management is decision-making, but how good decisions are made is not always self-evident.[57] Gary Klein cites work that illustrates the lack of clarity in the research about our ability to make sound decisions. On one hand, there is evidence that, with practice, "anyone can become an expert at almost anything." Conversely, there are indications that "all of us are inherently biased and unreliable as decision-makers."[58] Denise Rousseau says about "half of organizational decisions fail to achieve their goals," largely due to "managers who rush to judgment,

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impose their preferred solution, fail to confront the politics behind the decision, ignore uncertainty, downplay risks, and discourage search for alternatives."[59] More generally, Sydney Finkelstein suggests that bad decisions are made by a lapse in judgment with no mechanism to discover and reverse or modify it. Practically speaking, decisions are made continuously at all levels in libraries. Some have more impact and significance than others, and "complex decisions, involving interpretation and judgement, are dif-

ficult to get right."[60] Library leaders and managers also must determine how decisions are made and by whom. Victor Vroom explains that increasing participation in decisions can be beneficial but often slows the process. He points out that most managers seem to increase participation "on highly significant decisions, when they need the commitment of the group, when they lack expertise, when the likelihood of commitment to their decision is low, when the group's expertise is high and when the group has a history of working together effectively." Calling on group members to participate in decision-making helps to demonstrate confidence in the value and significance of the individuals and increases support for the leader or manager.[61] Participants also build knowledge, develop teamwork, and grow ownership for solving problems together.[62] That said, determining an appropriate level of participation and voice is complicated and in the eye of the beholder. For example, sometimes group participation in a decision is counterproductive. Randall Peterson writes, "In the absence of any common ground, discussion beyond the simple airing of views results in reduced satisfaction, frustration, and lack of support for any group decision that might be made."[63] Groups with a history of internal conflicts may find it more difficult to succeed in the decision-making process. Peterson also suggests that participants in a decision can begin the process with a preferred outcome already in mind before other options are discussed. He writes, "When there is a strong preconceived idea of what is right in a particular situation and the process does not yield that outcome, then people perceive the process as unfair." Furthermore, when leaders fail to exercise good judgment in determining who should be involved in a decision, workers become disenfranchised and time is wasted.[64] Robert Sutton calls this the "participation trap," where leaders and managers involve "people in too many decisions and the wrong decisions." He also cautions against bringing in participants who "lack skill, interest or time."[64] Sometimes workers are not inclined to be involved in decisions and would rather just do their job. There are also occasions at the front end of a decision when participation should be limited to foster honest debate and avoid the stifling effects of a larger group.[65]

Vroom says the quality of the decision depends on where the expertise exists and the cohesiveness of the group, not necessarily whether the decision-making process is autocratic or participatory. He writes that decision quality depends on

> where the relevant knowledge or expertise resides, that is, in the leader, in the group, or both. It depends on the goals of the potential participants, particularly on the extent to which the group or team members support the organizational objectives embedded in the problem. Finally, the amount of synergy exhibited in team-based processes depends on the skills and abilities of team members in working together effectively in solving problems.[66]

Noel Tichy and Warren Bennis write,

> It is essential to get the people who have something to contribute on your team and into the game at the right moment while keeping all others out. Sometimes it means skipping over layers of the organization. Sometimes it means reaching out to unexpected places. It's a tricky art to figure out how many people you need and who they are. You need to engage the right brains and experience, but also the right personalities and dynamics. You don't want groupthink, but carpers, complainers, and footdraggers are no help either.[67]

The parameters for making decisions go beyond determining who is at the table. The recipe for increasing the likelihood of a good decision includes serious thinking about what contributes to a satisfactory result. Sydney Finkelstein, Jo Whitehead, and Andrew Campbell write that a general decision-making sequence includes laying out the problem, defining objectives, generating options, evaluating each option against the others, choosing the best course of action, and monitoring progress while adjusting as necessary.[68] But this process involves considerable nuance and complexity.[69] Decisions can be affected by "economic, social, organizational, personal and psychological" factors, all of which require observation and judgment to effectively manage.[70] Economic factors, for example, can be especially problematic when not all participants are accountable for the fiscal dimension of the organization.[71] It is easy to support expensive ideas when someone else is responsible for the financial conse-

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quences. Rousseau writes, "All judgements and decisions are affected by the roles people play," so understanding the perspective of each participant is important to managing the threats to good decision-making. Leaders are often in a position where "contradictory expectations" need to be balanced.[72] Maggie Farrell says, "Perhaps the most common paradox for a leader in managing is the decision making process in which individuals want a leader who is decisive but individuals also want to provide input into the decision making process." As an example, she writes, "Many leaders have attended a meeting asking to discuss an issue yet some individuals will only want to know what the leader wants to do. The leader may also receive mixed messages that he/she never listens but when asking for communication from employees, none is given."[73]

The role of experience in how we make decisions should also be better understood. There are contradictions in how experience affects the decision-making process, but it is generally accepted that experience contributes positively to a rational decision.[74] As we tackle problems, we use experience to efficiently manage similar challenges. But Klein says, "We should be cautious about assuming that experience translates into expertise" because the experience may only be "surface routines" that do not necessarily "develop reliable expertise."[75] Since it is difficult to determine causation among all the variables that impact a decision, experience can sometimes lead us to the wrong conclusion.[75] Finkelstein describes "misleading experiences" as those that are not necessarily relevant but similar enough to capture our attention.[76] These experiences can also have emotional attachments that make them even more enticing to follow. For example, if a problem similar to those with which we have succeeded in the past emerges, we may subconsciously overlook important factors that differentiate the problem from past decisions and use the experience to justify a bad choice.[77]

Another powerful factor that impacts decision-making is self-interest. What is best for the worker may not be best for the organization, so library leaders and managers need to consider the motives influencing the decision-making process. Kellerman, draw-

ing on political theory, writes that "leaders lead and followers follow primarily because of self-interest."[78] Finkelstein, Whitehead, and Campbell state, "The evidence from our experience and from other researchers suggests that decision makers are far more af-

fected by self-interest than they claim and realize. It is this lack of awareness of the effects of self-interest that makes it particularly important to diagnose, because an unconscious influence is much harder for the decision maker to guard against." Self-interest can be driven by financial rewards or indirect forces, such as a desire to bolster one's reputation or popularity among the group. Most libraries have policies that address nepotism or other potential conflicts that bring strong emotional "tags" into the decision-making equation. But more subtle forms of self-interest bias are difficult to detect. Finkelstein,

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Whitehead, and Campbell add, "Our decisions can be strongly influenced by how they will affect the people to whom we feel attached. We will feel negative emotions about options in which those we are attached to are treated in a way we view as unfair."[79]

The collective impact emotions have on judgment and decision-making is still emerging, but Charles Dorison, Joowon Klusowski, Seunghee Han, and Jennifer Lerner cite evidence that "overlooking emotion will result in missed opportunities not only to correct biases, but also to use emotions as tools to improve decision making."[80] Since "emotions are ubiquitous," and our personal lives often overlap with our professional lives, leaders do not have the option of isolating the emotional influences of the day.[81] They must manage them simultaneously, in real time, without the benefit of scientific analysis. That said, research has revealed tendencies that may help leaders identify and predict emotional impacts to decision-making. Dorison and his coauthors have found "the negative emotion of anger, for example, actually produces optimism, while the negative emotion of fear leads to pessimism." They go on to say, "In choices between a sure gain and a gamble, angry individuals find the gamble more appealing, whereas fearful individuals tend to choose the sure thing."[82] Norbert Schwarz writes that "individuals in a happy mood tend to over-estimate the likelihood of positive, and to underestimate the likelihood of negative outcomes and events, whereas the reverse holds for individuals in a sad mood."[83] Emotions can also influence how people blame or give credit for the outcome of a decision.[84] Dorison, Klusowski, Han, and Lerner say,

> Sadness and anger, despite both being negative, have opposite effects on how people attribute blame or give credit. When people experience sadness, they consider situational factors to be more responsible for an ambiguous circumstance, even when that circumstance did not trigger their sadness. In contrast, when angry, people perceive individuals (as opposed to situations) to be more responsible for the same event.[85]

Finally, emotions can have an impact on the "depth of thought" decision makers apply. But research has revealed "only some emotions involve shallow thought. Managers who are aware of the specific feelings that tend to trigger shallow thought—specifically, happiness, anger, and pride—can avoid making decisions when such feelings are activated."[86]

A cooling-off period is one strategy to neutralize the effects of emotion on decision-making.[87] By stepping away and letting emotions recede, participants are in a better position to apply reason and avoid unnecessary bias. Another technique is to impose accountability standards on decision makers. Dorison and his coauthors write, "The anticipation of having to justify one's decisions leads decision makers to self-critically focus on important information rather than on their own incidental feelings of anger, research reveals. Thus, instead of trying to change potentially biasing feelings, managers can institute accountability for decision processes."[88]

Considering the factors mentioned that affect decision-making, Finkelstein, Whitehead, and Campbell describe four protections that serve as a hedge against bad decisions: (1) "experience, data, and analysis;" (2) "group debate, and challenge;" (3) "governance;"

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and (4) "monitoring." Decision-makers with experience in similar situations can inform and support a path forward, improving the likelihood of a good decision. Establishing a practice of encouraging debate and challenging ideas strengthens the process for developing a well-reasoned conclusion. Forming a level of governance or administrative approval that serves as a check, to make sure problematic ideas are not executed, is another mechanism to avoid bad decisions. Finally, monitoring the implementation of the outcome helps identify when a decision is faltering or needs revision.[89] In his analysis of decision-making, Klein summarized the reasons why decisions failed: (1) "lack of experience," (2) "lack of information," and (3) decision-makers ignoring information that was "inconvenient" or not understood.[90]

Findings and Discussion

Competing Values Leadership

Throughout this paper, the author has summarized ambiguous and paradoxical aspects of leadership and management that contribute to the complexity of library administrative roles. Library leaders and managers wrestle with managing individual and group dynamics that require a variety of skills. To exercise successful leadership, one must consider the organizational culture and understand the various motives people have in the workplace. Kim Cameron, Robert Quinn, Jeff DeGraff, and Anjan Thakor cite studies that indicate "two key dimensions of leadership behavior—person-focused leadership and task-focused leadership." They argue that research points to a relationship between the most successful leaders and their ability to focus on both, relating to people in a productive way and getting things done efficiently. It is not enough to relate well to followers; one must also be able to find a way to move things along effectively. An example of this balance is the trade-off between teamwork and speed. Cameron and his coauthors write, "Usually, leaders must trade off these two emphases—the more teamwork the less speed, and the more urgency the less collaboration."[91]

Many leadership decisions involve a combination of opposites, such as participation and expediency, which impact the outcome.[92] Cameron, Quinn, DeGraff, and Thakor point out how thinking paradoxically can lead to better results in an organization and add value by turning perceived trade-offs into complementary mindsets when integrated thoughtfully. They identify four seemingly contradictory leadership behaviors that can be used to maximize performance and avoid either-or thinking and describe this as competing values leadership. First, for example, most leaders value autonomy, but too little or too much self-direction can be problematic. Autonomous leaders are "secure, self-determined, and self-reliant," but too much autonomy can lead to "aloofness, withdrawal, and isolation," all limiting behaviors for fostering collaboration and teamwork.

Second, vision is often cited as essential for leaders because it conveys the ability to "envision the future, communicate dreams, and mobilize others to imagine positive outcomes." However, focusing too much on vision can be detrimental. Cameron and his coauthors state, "Individuals who over-emphasize, or exclusively emphasize, these orientations can become impractical, deluded, and unrealistic. Leaders' hopefulness and their visions can be irrational, illogical, and unsound. They may be enthusiastic about things that are not realistic or that may even be harmful over time. They may ignore hard facts, practical advice, or reasonable perspectives."

Third, confidence is commonly associated with effective leadership. Projecting optimism and self-assuredness can accomplish things, especially when there are differing views or conflicting positions on an issue. But "it is also possible for leaders to be too confident, or to be self-sufficient to the exclusion of openness. They can become proud and suffer from hubris, conceit, or arrogance."

A fourth combination of competing values in leadership is "caring confrontation."[93] Leaders who sincerely care for followers and focus on their professional development and growth are often well-liked and strongly supported. A viewpoint in which "human beings are the most important resource in any organization" is usually seen as an essential leadership role by followers. On the other hand, Cameron and his coauthors say,

> An over-emphasis or exclusive emphasis on caring and concern, of course, can become distorted and dysfunctional for both leaders and followers. Leaders can become permissive, indulgent, and lenient. They can remove responsibility and accountability from others by protecting them from the realities of organizational expectations. They can compromise standards and become wishy-washy in upholding requirements. In such cases, leaders allow others to perform below their level of capability. Whereas this may be done in the name of personal concern or even love, the consequences are anything but loving and encouraging.[94]

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paradoxical and frequently perceived by followers differently depending on personal viewpoint and professional values. In other words, good leadership is situational and often in the eye of the beholder. Storey and Salaman point out that "managing through paradox should ideally be neither a compromise nor a split between competing tensions. Rather, it seeks to be aware of both and to utilize the strength of both." They acknowledge the nature of decision-making to be unyieldingly complex in that a solution to one problem can also create another.[95] Managing unintended consequences becomes a key dimension of the role leaders and managers assume regularly.

Successful Leaders Exercise Good Judgment

Given the complexity and relatively uncertain nature of the decisions library leaders and managers make, how can they ensure the best possible outcome? The short answer: They exercise good judgment. Tichy and Bennis write that judgment is frequently left out of the leadership equation because "it is a hard subject." Putting your thumb on what judgment exactly implies can be challenging and is sometimes considered a result of one's "intuition," a significantly oversimplified characterization in some contexts. Tichy and Bennis say describing judgment as a "gut" feeling is "like saying that Duke beat Michigan at basketball because the Blue Devils scored more points. It may be true, but it is not helpful to understand how the Blue Devils came to outscore the Wolverines. What about the strategy, the practice, the timing, the training, and even the recruiting?" Therefore, it may be advantageous to look at judgment for what it really is: a "complex, constantly morphing process that unfolds in several dimensions." Tichy and Bennis describe judgment as similar to a "drama with plotlines, characters, and sometimes unforeseen twists and turns."[96] Good judgment emerges prominently as a requirement for making good decisions, which is the focus of good leadership. Activating good judgment is easier said than done, however, and it lies in the eye of the beholder.

The terms *decision* and *judgment* are often used interchangeably, but Tichy and Bennis make a distinction between the two. Decisions occur "in a single moment," whereas judgment is "a process that unfolds over time." They define judgment in three phases: preparation, making the call, and execution.[97] First, preparation amounts to discovering and recognizing the need for a judgment call. Sometimes doing nothing is the best decision, while other times, immediate intervention is needed, and leaders may uncover emerging problems baked into the fabric of the organization. Next, leaders make the call and act to solve the problem or address the circumstance. Depending on the urgency, this phase may occur immediately or play out over time. Finally, they follow up with any adjustments or modifications to the decision. Because every situation is different, and a leader must navigate the cultural and situational nuances in every case, exercising judgment to make good decisions is an art, not a science. Max Deutscher writes, "Without judgement we could only imitate others in following rules. In making our judgements we achieve what theory, calculation and deduction cannot accomplish."[98]

Effective leaders also differentiate an important decision from a trivial one. Such an exercise in judgment is a critical part of leading in ways that matter most. To coin a phrase, it is penny-wise and dollar-foolish to spend time making judgments on issues of little relevance or consequence. Another important factor for leaders to consider is

timing. There can be an advantage to waiting on a decision, but delay can also result in a missed opportunity.[99] Leaders who use timing strategically to better coordinate their efforts will likely see a greater return on their time investment.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Within the many publications in the field of library leadership and management, there are contradictions as to what effective leadership looks like and how one becomes an exemplary leader. Many observers argue good leadership is demonstrated through transparency, engaging followers in decisions that affect them. But, as Tichy and Bennis assert, too much participation, especially at the wrong times, can cause those involved to "lose perspective, self-direction, and integrity. They may become corrupted or com-promised as they try to please the group. They become reliant on others to create stan-dards and behavior patterns and lose sight of their own core values."[100] Leaders know "that extensive consensus building doesn't always result in a decision. When a decision needs to be made and group decision processes get bogged down, a leader often must step up and make the decision, integrating what the group has considered with a host of other factors."[101] Sometimes, the outcomes of the decision-making process do not meet the participants' expectations. Farrell writes, "Occasionally individuals may state that an organization or team is not transparent, but the reality is that an employee may disagree with the decision or that the employee is appropriately not part of the team responsible for the process."[102]

The apparent discrepancy between library leadership and library management can-not go unrecognized since our culture clearly observes a distinction between the two, albeit inconclusive and varied. Viewed against the other more pressing challenges in library administration, such as improving decision-making and understanding work-place ethos, library leaders should avoid getting caught up in the semantics of leadership versus management and focus on strategies that lead more directly to organizational improvement. Fixating on the hypothetical heuristics of leadership and management creates an unnecessary tradeoff, in which the decision-maker sacrifices a potential gain by choosing one alternative over another. Concentrating on efforts that connect directly to good decisions will move the library workforce more productively toward greater engagement and productivity.

On the job, leaders must figure out how to manage the cultural influences in the workplace and employ strategies that move the organization forward. What accounts for good leadership in the mind of one person is not necessarily good leadership for some-one else.[103] That is why leadership is so difficult to study and carry out—it is extremely complex and in the eye of the beholder.[104] Cronin and Genovese write, "Followers can be jealous, fickle, and mean, and they often have a 'what have you done for me lately?' attitude."[105] Managing the individual and collective personalities of the organization is key. A strategy leaders may find helpful is to develop a mindset that integrates opposites into their understanding of leadership and to focus on exercising good judgment. For example, recognizing the value of autonomy along with teamwork is a practical way to meet employees' varied needs.[106] Embracing confidence with humility acknowledges two opposites that may coexist if nurtured in appropriate circumstances. In another example

from Cameron and his coauthors, leaders who are both caring and confrontational are "patient and powerful, compassionate and bold, selfless and challenging. They have the inclination to put the welfare of others on an equal footing with their personal interests while boldly and unwaveringly challenging them to live up to a standard that is being modeled for them by the leaders themselves."[107] Tensions within organizations always exist, and leaders must have a mindset to employ strategies that improve effectiveness. Thinking of opposites as mutually beneficial and complementary will set the leader up for a more realistic approach in their work and likely lead to more satisfied employees overall.[108]

For library leaders to be relevant and effective, they must occupy a position of both stability and flexibility, welcoming change but not just for the sake of it. They must be aware of the cultural nuances that affect decisions and influence both positive and negative behavior. Throughout the reporting structure of the library, administrators must challenge stubborn traditions that have become ineffective over time, while fostering risk-taking and development of new ways to advance the profile of library work. These challenges may threaten key stakeholders and test an administrator's resolve; choosing what not to do is as important as choosing what to do. Efforts to improve diversity, inclusion, and equity in the library workplace are one example where competing values are often at work. Employee self-interest and cultural inertia can make it difficult to impose changes within the organization. For example, broadening the minimum qualifications for some library positions is one way to remove barriers to entry for historically unrepresented populations, but some view this as undermining the value of librarianship and related roles. Navigating these opposing forces at the administrative level requires special care and attention.

> **For library leaders to be relevant and effective, they must occupy a position of both stability and flexibility, welcoming change but not just for the sake of it. They must be aware of the cultural nuances that affect decisions and influence both positive and negative behavior.**

This author encourages a shift in thinking for library leaders to a mindset that is less concerned about whether they measure up to the traditional images of leadership. Rather, library leaders should employ their personal strengths toward actions that lead to good decisions, inspired by good judgment and sound reasoning. Since, as shown, there is likely no concrete, reliable formula or list of personal characteristics that makes a great leader (or manager), time and energy would be better spent focusing on developing and perfecting the phases of good judgment. Celebrated leadership attributes such as vision, teamwork, confidence, and compassion are admittedly influential to a leader's success, but so, too, are the opposites.[109] A leader's toolbox should include all the tools—not just some—and leaders would do well to recognize the advantage in using competing values concurrently to maximize their effectiveness. Cronin and Genovese argue that "a leader must stir our blood *and* appeal to our reason. Enthusiasm lifts all enterprises, and yet excessive enthusiasm can destroy the integrity of the operation. Both enthusiasm and

optimism can be 'force multipliers'; yet both, in excess, are dysfunctional or worse."[110] Klein summarizes more generally, saying, "Many researchers are now advocating for a dual-system mode of thinking. The automatic system is fast, automatic, effortless, and emotional, and uses tacit knowledge. The reflective system is slower, conscious, effortful, deliberate, logical, and serial, and uses explicit knowledge. These two systems, which work in different ways, complement each other."[111]

Leadership is good judgment, period. Leaders may need to exhibit a vast array of behaviors, many dependent upon the circumstances of the moment. Exercising good judgment with relationships, planning and strategy, and handling "crisis" situations that require immediate attention are where leaders need to focus, to perform their roles effectively.[112] It is necessary for both leaders and followers to understand that leadership is complex and exceptionally nuanced, involving dichotomies and contradictions; essentially, what pleases some will not please others. Leadership means bringing people together but also dividing them.[113] It means supporting and challenging them. It means learning how emotions can affect decision-making in the context of the culture. And decisions—good decisions—need to be made strategically and courageously, through good judgment, if the organization and its leaders are to move forward, flourish, and realize their collective potential.

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