

*B. AUBREY FISHER  
MEMORIAL LECTURE*

# *The Study of Leadership*

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# The Study of Leadership

Until mid-December of 1911 no person had ever stood at the South Pole. In late October of that year two parties began the trek toward that objective. It was a race. The Norwegian group, led by Roald Amundsen, started from a base camp at the Bay of Whales on the Ross Ice Shelf, 700 miles from the Pole. Traveling by ski, with dogs and sledges, Amundsen's five-man Polar party reached their objective on December 15. Following a careful "boxing" of the Pole, this group made a fast return to their base camp, arriving on January 26. The British team, led by Robert Falcon Scott, started from McMurdo Sound on the Ross Ice Shelf, 800 miles from the Pole. Traveling with motor sledges, by ski, with ponies and dogs, this group moved out four days after the Norwegians. The motor sledges broke down within a few days. The group then advanced using three modes of travel; man-hauling (slowest), with ponies, and with dogs (fastest). The ponies worked until the last was shot on December 9. On December 11, several members of the support group turned for home, as planned, and took the dog teams. Then, with ski and man-hauling of sledges, the group faced a 120 mile uphill pull along the Beardmore Glacier and 150 additional miles on the higher plateau to the Pole. The discovery of the Norwegian tent and flag when Scott's five-man party arrived at the Pole on January 17, 1912, must have been shattering. One month later, Edgar Evans died on the return journey, a broken man suffering perhaps from a concussion, too little food, and the shock of being preempted at the Pole. On March 17, in pain and barely able to walk on severely frostbitten feet, Lawrence Oates crawled out of the tent to die and detain his companions progress no more. Scott, Wilson, and Bowers struggled on for a few more days. They reached their final camp on March 21 with little fuel and food for only two more days. Scott had a badly frozen right foot and could hardly walk. A blizzard began and they could go no further. For over a week they lay in their tent, writing final letters and messages. Scott's last diary entry was dated March 29. They were 11 miles from their next One Ton Depot with food and fuel. Their bodies were found in their tent eight months later by a search party from the British base camp.

In 1979 Roland Huntford published a book, *Scott and Amundsen*, describing this epic race for the South Pole. Huntford's research seems not to have left an important relevant volume or diary unturned. His data gathering appears to be impeccable. A recent Masterpiece Theatre television series, "The Last Place on Earth," was based on Huntford's work. Huntford portrays Amundsen as a knowledgeable, careful, resourceful, vigilant, sensitive, loyal, magnetic,

dominating leader. These are Huntford's words. In contrast, Scott is described as unsuited for command, divorced from reality, with defective judgment, irrational, a poor planner, lazy in preparation, given to vacillation and improvisation, insecure, emotional and overly sentimental, isolated, jealous and petty, moody, given to self-delusion and evading responsibility, lacking human understanding and sensitivity—in sum, an incompetent leader. The contrast drawn by Huntford could hardly be greater. I wonder if Amundsen could have been so good, and Scott so bad as expedition leaders.

In this paper I would like to consider the study of leadership. How can we study leadership—and learn something? What is a leader? What is leadership? How should we assess leadership?

First, let me say a word about a leader we all knew—B. Aubrey Fisher. Aubrey and I had some similar and overlapping interests for many years. I was a few years older and entered the field a few years before Aubrey completed his Ph.D. at Minnesota. Aubrey paid me that great compliment researchers value so highly. He cited some of my publications and actively used some of my work on small group idea development, categories for interaction analysis, and stochastic processes for data analysis. Aub incorporated these efforts and greatly refined, augmented, and developed them as part of his own considerable contribution to research on the small group decision making process. Today I would like to reciprocate. I would like to work with some of Aub's ideas which he presented at the Penn State Conference on Small Group Communication in 1982, and which were published last year in the volume edited by Hirokawa and Poole, *Communication and Group Decision-Making*. Aub's paper, "Leadership: When Does the Difference Make a Difference?," deplored the sorry state of our knowledge about leadership. He held that leadership is an overwhelmingly complex process and that we must try to understand that social process in all its complexity. Aubrey took up Karl Weick's metaphor of "leader as medium" with the view that a leader must be complex and must understand complexity. Aub drew upon Drecksel's research seeking for possible patterns in leader interaction. Drecksel could find no specific behavior nor specific combination of behaviors to be consistently related to leadership. Yet it did appear that leader interaction was different from that of nonleader interaction. Leader interaction was found to be consistently more complex,

more differentiated, than nonleader interaction. Aubrey argued that rather than attempt to understand complexity by simplifying it, we must attempt to understand it as a phenomenon in its own right. We should try to maximize the leader's repertoire of types of behavior, and increase the leader's capacity for being flexible and adaptable to changing situations.

Weick's paper, from which Aubrey drew inspiration, appeared in a small volume titled *Leadership: Where Else Can We Go?* Weick discussed the use of a contour gauge as a mediator between some core event and some final action. The gauge he described was six inches long with 180 movable steel spines. When pressed against some solid object an imprint of the object is registered and recorded on the gauge. Weick points out that the gauge, to be truly useful, must have many elements (complexity), each independent of the others, and each influenced by external, rather than by internal circumstances. Using the gauge as analogy, he suggested that leaders must perceive completely and accurately the total situation they face. They need to have complexity (be capable of great differentiation) and be open and sensitive to external stimuli in order to accurately register and assess a complex situation. Followers use a leader as their contour gauge. The leader is their medium with respect to the environment and followers see through the eyes of the leader. Martin Luther King, Jr. could serve as an example of a leader who defined the situation for his followers. Weick also suggested that when the leader wishes to act or influence others, then he or she must, in effect, apply the gauge internally to the self in order to assess inner forces, needs, and values. Again the gauge must be capable of complex differentiation. The gauge is used externally to perceive and assess a situation and internally to prepare for action. Aubrey suggested using Weick's image of a contour gauge, the notion of a leader as medium, and the embracing of complexity as the direction in which we should proceed. So let me walk that path for a bit, with contour gauge in hand.

## I

Aubrey began his paper on leadership with some comments on the paucity of our understanding of this phenomenon. His was no isolated evaluation. James MacGregor Burns suggested that "leadership is one of the most observed and least understood phenomena on earth." (1978, p 2) After completing a massive inventory of "all the published research findings on leadership" in 1974, Ralph Stogdill concluded:

*Four decades of research on leadership have produced a bewildering mass of findings...It is difficult to know what, if anything, has been convincingly demonstrated by replicated research. The*

*endless accumulation of empirical data has not produced an integrated understanding of leadership. (p vii)*

Lombardo and McCall asserted that students of leadership have discovered three things:

*(1) the number of unintegrated models, theories, prescriptions, and conceptual schemes of leadership is mind-boggling; (2) much of the literature is fragmentary, trivial, unrealistic, or dull; and (3) the research results are characterized by Type III errors (solving the wrong problem precisely) and by contradictions. (1978, p 3)*

But there is another side. Bernard Bass, who produced a revised and expanded edition of *Stogdill's Handbook of Leadership* in 1981, a hefty volume incorporating over 5000 references on the topic, is more sanguine about the accumulated product of past research and more optimistic about future research.

We might ask what would result if we were to press a wide contour gauge with many spines down upon the research on leadership surveyed in the available handbooks. I think we would see a narrow area of the gauge greatly affected by hundreds of behavioral and social scientific studies completed by psychologists, sociologists, political scientists, students of business and management, communication scholars, and others with related interests. There would be laboratory studies of ad hoc groups assembled for the research seeking relationships between variables of interest, empirical investigations of intact groups, along with a sprinkling of field case studies. The bulk of the studies would have been completed in recent decades. With the exception of an occasional brief mention of Plato, there would be few references dated before 1930. The remaining area of our contour gauge would reveal little.

I don't mean here to lament what the contour gauge senses for I believe much has been learned about leadership in the past fifty years. I do lament what the gauge does not show. There seems to be an exclusion of historical items, fictive items, or items from different disciplines employing different methodologies. A complex of views about this phenomenon is missing and the references cited define a relatively closed system. Why is this so? One reason has to do with the nature of our current data bases. State-of-the-art reviewers frequently outline their search procedures as Bass did in his preface. These reviews tap standard data bases which cover a discrete list of scholarly journals and abstracting services. Some have included, for example, *Communication Monographs* but not *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*. Whenever one is limited, however necessarily, to the "places" in which to search for relevant data for a research topic then that search will always be limited, and in *systematic* ways. The fact that abstracting services must be and are journal specific means that out-of-field items or items in which the phenomenon of interest is not central will be overlooked, and the items

finally included in the reference list will come from a screening process involving something other than random deletions. This process may well yield a reasonably complete coverage of items *central* to a prescribed topic and research approach. But items on the periphery or in other fields will be disproportionately unrepresented. This is a genuinely limiting condition for it is often on the edges of a research area that new developments are most likely. It is when the political scientist takes up the idea of a social psychologist and moves it into a new area that new developments and insights may occur.

The bulk of studies on leadership in the past few decades have been completed by social scientists. Since research reviews are usually carried out by persons also conducting the research it is not surprising that social science methodologies have been predominant in these reviews. A desire to face complexity may lead some now to seek to do more with historical contributions or insights derived from imaginative writing. Irving Janis' *Victims of Groupthink* provides an example of the use of historical documents to better understand group deliberative efforts. I have begun to work with historical materials on leadership. I believe imaginative writing could similarly provide insights and new dimensions for our investigations of leadership. It is comforting to see that recent reviews by social scientists do call for increased complexity and a reversal of the reductionist strategy. The call is made for field studies to be integrated with laboratory studies, longitudinal research in addition to single-meeting group studies, and macro as well as micro studies of group process. The complex view requires that we resist the temptation to seek our improved understanding of leadership only within a closed and limited system.

Some of the narrowness noted here may have come from an unrestrained emphasis on scientific research processes, a trend lately diminished. Bass pointed to a paradox for social scientific laboratory research on leadership.

*The more aseptic and controlled the laboratory study, the greater its precision in outcome. For physics, such precision increases confidence in the generality of the finding; in social science, it does just the opposite. (1981, p 601)*

The apparent antihistorical bias may further be attributed to a desire to study leadership as a science rather than as an art or as some of both. Thomas Kuhn (1969) remarked on the difference between scientists' and artists' divergent responses to their discipline's past. Past products of artistic activity can still be vital parts of the present artistic scene. One can be interested in Van Gogh, and also in Rembrandt; in Jane Austen, and also in William Shakespeare. But science, in contrast, tends to destroy its past. Such a bias may help to explain the peak and valley of our contour gauge. But again, let me emphasize that I am most concerned about the valley in the study of leadership.

## II

Suppose our contour gauge were now applied to the many *definitions* of leadership which abound — and also to those *listings* of persons who are classed as leaders. One researcher found 130 different definitions of leadership, each claiming to describe the single concept. We have differences, but little differentiation. The contour gauge would react the same, with "leadership," regardless of which definition it touches. Each is sensed as equivalent of the others. Bass points out that leadership has been seen as:

- the focus of group process*
- a personality attribute*
- the art of inducing compliance*
- an exercise of influence*
- a particular kind of act*
- a form of persuasion*
- a power relation*
- an instrument of goal attainment*
- an effect of interaction*
- a differentiated role*
- an initiation of structure (1981, p 584)*

Again, all these differing perspectives were classed together under the single label.

The individual in charge could be a tyrant with absolute power and potential for the control and coercion of others, or a head who was appointed, assigned, selected, or elected to the position of authority within an organizational structure, or a manager whose special task it is to coordinate and facilitate the work of others. All might be called "leader." Amundsen leading the five-man team to the Pole was called a leader. Churchill exhorting his fellow Britishers to their "finest hour" was called a leader. The foreman on an assembly line in a Wisconsin furniture manufacturing plant was called a leader. An anonymous sophomore assigned to chair a 20-minute discussion rank-ordering the desirability of certain items if the group were lost on the moon was called a leader. Researchers have used the term "leader" to describe each of these persons. Any instrument that assesses Amundsen, Churchill, a Wisconsin foreman, and an anonymous sophomore under a single heading cannot be very discriminating. It is as if our contour gauge has a single spine and senses every stimulus equally. Almost every act of prominence is

seen as leadership, and every prominent person in almost every kind of group is seen as a leader. All are alike. There is little differentiation and little use of complexity. Louis Pondy asks:

*Eskimos have seven different names for snow because they are so familiar with it. Does our insistence on the single term "leadership" say something about our familiarity or experience with it? (1978, p 88)*

Assuming that greater discrimination would be helpful, I would suggest that we distinguish leadership consistently from those forms of headship in which authority and power are assigned by agents outside the group to be led, or even when elected by the followers themselves, *prior* to the assumption of the headship role. I am suggesting here that the role of "leader" cannot be preassigned but must be earned in the active ongoing context of group effort. I would also distinguish leadership from management in which an elected or selected person takes on the special duties of coordinating assignments, scheduling, facilitation, and serving as spokesperson for the working group. Persons occupying positions of head or manager may or may not be leaders. It clearly would be easier for such persons to become leaders because of the prominence achieved through the roles they play. Frequently they are leaders. They may even have been elected or selected for their headship positions because of perceived leadership potential. But I would prefer to differentiate leadership from headship and managership.

James MacGregor Burns' characterizations of "transforming" leadership and "moral" leadership seem to be useful:

*The transforming leader recognizes and exploits an existing need or demand of a potential follower. But, beyond that, the transforming leader looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower. The result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents.*

*By this term (moral leadership) I mean, first, that leaders and led have a relationship not only of power but of mutual needs, aspirations, and values; second, that in responding to leaders, followers have adequate knowledge of alternative leaders and programs and the capacity to choose among those alternatives; and third, that leaders take responsibility for their commitments. . . Moral leadership emerges from, and always returns to, the fundamental wants and*

*needs, aspirations, and values of the followers. (1978, p 4)*

This view of leadership distinguishes the use of power to command and control from the use of rhetorical influence in affecting group action. This view calls for consideration of the mutual needs, aspirations, and values of both leader and followers. It requires the input of followers in choosing a leader. It holds that simply being in the position to command or control is not in itself a sign of leadership. Leadership is the demonstrated ability to secure coordinated collective action by the members of a group toward ends which are mutually desirable, within a context in which group members have some freedom to assign the role of leadership. Leadership comes out of the interaction of persons united in group work. There is an example setting and teaching function apparent in this leadership. In such a context some followers may be moved to take on some of the leadership roles some of the time, and this will be encouraged by the leader.

Nearly 50 years ago William Foote Whyte studied leadership in street corner gangs, presenting the results in his classic *Street Corner Society*. Interestingly, his perspective on leadership is much in harmony with that recommended here. His observations offered genuine insight into actual functioning leadership:

*The leader is the focal point for the organization of his group. In his absence the members are divided into a number of small groups. There is no common activity or general conversation.*

*The leader is the man who acts when the situation requires action. He is more resourceful than his followers.*

*The followers look to him for advice and encouragement, and he receives more of their confidences than any other man. Consequently, he knows more about what is going on in the group than anyone else.*

*The leader is respected for his fair-mindedness.*

*The leader must have some skill in whatever pursuits are of particular interest to the group.*

*The leader is better known and more respected outside his group than are any of his followers. One of the most important functions he performs is that of relating his group to other groups in the district. . . he is expected to represent the interests of his followers.*

*The leader mobilizes the group by deal-*

ing first with his lieutenants.

*The leader is not the only one who proposes a course of action. But the suggestion of others must go through the proper channels if they are to go into effect.*

*The patterns of interaction may be seen in terms of group equilibrium. . . the interactions of the group members fall into customary patterns through which group activities are and have been organized. The pattern of interactions may undergo modification, but abrupt and drastic changes can destroy the equilibrium. (1943/1955, pp 255-272)*

Whyte's leaders avoided open confrontation when possible, and used keen sensitivity, adaptation, and interpersonal interaction skills to move the group members toward mutually advantageous ends without overt reliance on evident power or status differentials.

The suggestion here is that *leadership should be considered as — the demonstrated ability — to secure coordinated collective action — toward mutually desirable ends — by members of a group — within the context of group activity.* A further suggestion is that this view of leadership should be distinguished from headship and from managership. Consider for a moment a professional football game. Someone calls the play — a pass to the tight end. The team members accept the fact that some designated person will make this critical decision. The communication involved requires clarity and intelligibility. Calling the play is an act of headship. Someone calls the signals — the play starts on 21. Again, the team members accept that some designated person will make this procedural decision. Again, the communication involved requires clarity and intelligibility. Calling the signals is an act of managership. Someone may exhort the team members, and especially the left side of the line, to make a special effort for this critical play. No single person is designated constantly to fill this role. But some can do it with more effect than others. The necessary communication involves more than clarity and intelligibility. It also requires rhetorical adaptation and influence. This is the act of leadership. On some football teams the quarterback may take on all three of these functions. But on other teams the plays may be sent in from a coach, other team members may serve as field leaders, and the quarterback will simply call the signals and play his position.

I would like to employ this concept of leadership, and also the notion of the multi-spined contour gauge for looking further at the study of leadership. My aim is to consider how we can learn more about this phenomenon. I want to consider a few obvious problems in the study of leadership — and suggest a few approaches for dealing with them. These problems seem often to be attributable to desires to simplify a complex

phenomenon. I believe they also reveal something about our larger cultural values. There are moments when I believe our study of leadership reveals more about us than it does about leadership. For illustrative examples I would like to draw on Scott and Amundsen. Remember that both held assigned positions of headship. My question is — how can we best assess and understand something of their leadership?

### III

One major difficulty we seem to encounter is recognizing leadership when we see it. This is a problem of definition and the use of definition. In many studies leadership has been defined as a form of personal influence, but then is assessed not by attempting to observe personal influence, but rather by looking at the final group productivity. This procedure occurs in probably the majority of studies in handbooks on leadership. Leadership is measured by group success. So, it follows that Amundsen was a good leader and Scott was a poor leader. There are two difficulties here. First, this research approach fails to tap directly what leadership has been conceptualized to be. Second, it confounds the existence or fact of leadership with the quality of leadership. Not only does a successful group product indicate leadership, but it is assumed to indicate good leadership. The existence of leaders and the quality of good leadership are seen as synonymous. I propose that we might better think of leadership in terms of "more or less" and "effective or ineffective" rather than in terms of "good or bad." We can look for demonstrated ability to secure coordinated action in terms of "more or less." The evaluative "good or bad" seems more appropriately applied to the ends of the group action, desired and/or achieved.

Success can be troublesome. It creates an aura of exaggerated positive feeling that is seldom given to qualification and careful discrimination. Is it possible to have a successful group outcome with ineffective leadership? Of course! Group activities ranging from international diplomacy to competitive business ventures to high school sporting events provide ample instances in which ineffective leadership in one group is countered by even less effective leadership in a competing group. But this argument does not depend upon a compounding of ineffectiveness. There are those who are convinced that the potential impact of leadership has been overemphasized in any event. Kerr (1977), for example, suggested the importance of organizational rules and customs rather than leadership in keeping a group enterprise going. In my example earlier, a football play could have been called, signals called, and the play run without any act of leadership. The point is that many forces in addition to leadership influence the outcome of group activity. Any group process is affected

by the special individual abilities, motivations, attributions, interpretations, and histories brought to the event by the several group members. Beyond these personal factors there are the other circumstances in that special setting, such as the organizational rules and customs already mentioned, and timing, and the weather, and so on. All these "other" factors contribute to a final group product.

One of those other factors is sheer chance. The element of chance and the effect of small differences seem to be greatly underemphasized in looking at group products. We should not forget "For the want of a nail..." and "my kingdom for a horse." In late February 1912, two members of the British party started South with dog teams to meet and help the Polar team back. They made 20 miles per day and arrived at One Ton Depot on March 4th. They considered going farther South, but waited there until March 10th before turning back for the base camp. At that moment Scott's party, with Oates still alive, was fading rapidly just 60 miles away. Suppose they had travelled South for three more days and met the Polar group. What then? Scott's group might have been saved. But would that have had anything to do with his leadership?

And consider Amundsen. On November 1st he looked out of his tent and saw a fog so heavy that one could not see 50 feet ahead. He decided to travel anyway. The group ran off course and into a series of crevasses. Amundsen decided to push on. Then one of the team fell in the middle of a crevasse, dangling only by his skis. The sledge slid sideways to the edge of the crevasse and the dogs started fighting. Another foot and sledge, dogs, and Hanssen would have disappeared. Another in the group repeated this same event later in the day. What might have happened if supplies and one of the party had perished? Would they have had to turn back? Safe or sorry, what would the outcome reveal about leadership? Amundsen maintained that a person makes his own luck, but his decisions on that day pushed luck and chance nearly to the limit.

And what about Shackleton, Scott's other great and very bitter rival? Ernest Shackleton was with Scott's Discovery expedition to the South in 1901-1904 and their conflict began then. To Scott's dismay, Shackleton led his own expedition South in 1907 and reached within 100 miles of the Pole before turning back. In 1914 he set out for his greatest adventure in the Endurance to attempt a crossing of the Antarctic continent. The Endurance soon was frozen in the ice, then crushed, and later sank. Shackleton and his crew drifted on ice flows and dragged three life boats for 600 miles. This was followed by a 700 mile voyage by six of the group in a 22 foot boat over icy seas to South Georgia Island. Three of the men then had to struggle for 20 more miles, crossing an unknown mountain range in bitter cold, to reach the safety of a whaling station on the far side of the island. Incredibly, no lives were lost on this epic journey. But the stated group goal was not attained. What does this nearly unbelievable series of events say about leadership?

Amundsen, Scott, and Shackleton all made decisions that did or easily could have proved to be disastrous. But can we require correct judgment about events as the test of leadership? One can have correct judgment in isolation. Oates may have had correct judgment but he surely was no leader. To be a leader the judgment, correct or incorrect, must be implemented in group action.

I am questioning the use of group outcome as a very sound indicator of leadership. Too many other factors are involved in producing any outcome. It may provide a tidy explanation if a leader makes a correct decision that works out successfully. But a leader can be wrong and still be a leader. The conception of a leader that I am suggesting would require that the assessment consider a complex of other elements — the ability to secure, within a specific setting, voluntary, coordinated, collective action toward mutually desirable ends.

The word "voluntary" creates difficulties. Which follower behaviors can be attributed to the "leadership" of these men, and which to the fact of their "headship?" Both Amundsen and Scott on occasion resorted to the issuing of official orders based on their headship. Both had conflicts with followers. The personal bitterness between Scott and Shackleton may have started with Shackleton's challenge for a degree of leadership on the Discovery expedition. And Amundsen faced a mutiny when Johansen, an older and experienced Polar explorer who had attempted the North Pole with Nansen, questioned Amundsen's leadership abilities in a tirade before the entire Norwegian group. Amundsen afterward spoke to his men one by one, isolated Johansen, and refused thereafter to speak to him except on perfunctory matters. Johansen committed suicide. But it was true also that both Scott and Amundsen had team members who voluntarily and eagerly followed their lead.

Huntford suggests that Scott persuaded Wilson and Bowers to lie down with him in that last campsite and wait for at least nine days while their lives ebbed away, rather than try for the last few miles to One Ton Depot. If so, was that not an amazing demonstration of leadership? Consideration of followers is often listed as one of two major classes of behavior of leadership. Did Scott show consideration? One could argue that Scott's concern was more for the immortality of Wilson and Bowers than for their mortality. Which was it? Which was the more desirable end? Which was the more mutually desirable end?

Assessing desired group ends is difficult for two major reasons. First, the ends for any group are often multiple rather than single and simple, and second, they are subject to constant modification and change. The British expedition to the south had several goals. The Pole was one, but there were several scientific objectives also in the plan, from the attempt to use motorized sledges to the collecting of geological samples and Emperor penguin eggs at a certain point of incubation. After coming on the Norwegian flag at the Pole Wilson



wrote of Amundsen, "He has beaten us in so far as he has made a race of it. We have done what we came for all the same and as our programme was made out." Wilson was still collecting geological samples up to a month before he died, and thirty pounds of these samples were dragged by the British to their very last campsite.

Amundsen's goal did seem more straightforward—to be first at the South Pole — but how that came to be the group goal is another story. Fridtjof Nansen was the creative, intellectual Norwegian explorer of the time. He developed many of the successful techniques for travel in the far North. Nansen had noticed on an early sledging journey that timber and sea life from Eastern Siberia were found floating off Greenland. How did they get there? He proposed a theory of ice pack drift and planned to test that theory by having a ship frozen in the ice and be carried over the North Pole in the process of the drift. A special ship, the *Fram*, was designed and built to withstand the forces of such an ordeal. The *Fram* set out in 1893 and completed the journey, supporting Nansen's theory, in 1896.

Amundsen proposed repeating Nansen's drift but to enter the ice pack at a higher latitude and perhaps drift over the North Pole itself. He said "I want to make it absolutely clear that this — the assault on the Pole [North], will not be the aim of the expedition. The main object is a scientific study of the Polar Sea itself." His stated plan was to outfit the *Fram* for seven years, try to get farther North than Nansen, and prepare for a drift of 4 to 5 years over the Polar Sea. He emphasized the scientific intentions, "from the moment the vessel has been frozen into the ice, the observations begin with which I hope to solve some of the hitherto unsolved mysteries." Based on this proposal, Amundsen was able to receive Nansen's blessing and the use of *Fram*, he received financial backing for the venture, and he assembled a crew and supplies. In March of 1910 Scott tried to contact Amundsen to propose scientific cooperation as he would be going South while Amundsen went North. Amundsen avoided an encounter.

After the *Fram* was underway, Amundsen wrote to Nansen informing him that he was going for the South Pole. He took strategic crew members into his confidence before announcing his plan to the full crew. He sent a cable to Scott, "Beg leave to inform you *Fram* proceeding Antarctic." His crew accepted his plan and the single goal seemed to be to arrive first at the South Pole. For the crew the goal shifted abruptly from the North Pole to the South Pole. But, perhaps there was no difference. Either plan could have been an equal adventure for some crew members, and an equal escape for others.

To study leadership one must try to understand the complex of desirable ends for the varied members of the group involved. Clearly those ends will be multi-dimensional. And they will change. When Shackleton's *Endurance* sank, the goals of his group changed to survival. For Edward Wilson, the goals in February must have been for survival, but also apparently still for scientific results. For Scott, Bowers, and Wilson, the

goal never seemed to narrow solely to survival. For, if so, how can we explain waiting over ten days to die just 11 miles from food.

My argument is that to assess leadership by looking most closely at the final group outcome is too restricted a view. One could come at this problem in a different way and ask the question — what understanding of leadership would cause one to look to group productivity as an especially important measure for assessment? The answer to that question reveals again the loss from combining headship, managership, and leadership as a single concept. It seems to me that headship could be appropriately assessed in large part by group outcome. That activity, in purest form, and without the coupling of leadership, is primarily a task function. The "yards gained" seems a fairly direct and immediate measure of the play called. But leadership, as I have defined it, facilitates process and effects improved group coordination. These outcomes certainly can then contribute to improved group productivity. But the assessment of leadership is most direct when viewing the group process. I would see headship assessed by group product, leadership by improved group process, and managership by some combination of product and process.

It would seem most appropriate to assess leadership in the terms in which we define it. Yet to look for evidence of an ability to secure voluntary coordinated collective action toward mutually desired ends is a complex and difficult task. As I look at Scott and Amundsen I see two men who showed a measure of these leadership effects. Neither was unflawed, and it is difficult to separate their individual decision making and the final group outcomes from the signs of their leadership. In both cases it is especially hard to tease apart the effects of headship from leadership. It will surely take more effort than I have been able to give it thus far.

Yet Huntford's assertions about their leadership trouble me. His factual accounts appear to be complete, detailed, and careful. But his interpretations about their comparative leadership abilities seem too extreme. Nevertheless, the contrast is dramatic, and it was Huntford's work on which the television series was based rather than on other works published on the same topic a few years earlier with more moderate views of Scott, such as David Thomson's *Scott's Men*, and Elspeth Huxley's *Scott of the Antarctic*. This choice and emphasis may reflect our cultural attraction to and preference for dramatic conflict, bi-polar extremes, and an essentially simpler account of phenomena.

## IV

Athena was neither born to nor raised by a mother. She sprang full-grown and in full armor from the head of Zeus. We employ a similar myth often with those persons we term leaders. We act as if those persons had no past, no outside influences, no distractions. We see them as rational, self-sufficient, intentional, free creatures. We prefer to view our leaders as personalities. We prefer to focus on their overt behavior in a narrow setting during a limited period of time. In fact, we overpersonalize the concept of leadership.

Again, it may be a cultural preference for parsimony and simplicity but we appear to see leaders (persons) much more readily than leadership (actions). At the same time that we personalize this role we also, as I suggested earlier, combine the authority of head, the structural functions of manager, and the rhetorical influence of leader. Studies of leadership often ask participants to rate or rank their fellow group members as leaders. But are the distinctions of leadership, headship, and managership provided? If not, how do we know what definitions the raters have in mind? We must realize that not only leaders "emerge" in groups. Group members can make attributions of headship and managership as well. If a person plays the most prominent role in a group, do we have a leader, or a manager?

It is sometimes suggested that leaders "emerge" during group activity, a description usually intended to differentiate between "appointed" and "emergent" leaders. I have always questioned the use of "emerge" in this context. Emerge means to come into view as "the sun emerges from an eclipse," to become manifest as "a question emerges," or to issue from an inferior condition into well-being as "to emerge from poverty." My image is of Superman emerging from a telephone booth. This term describes the "what," the fact of a change. But the agent seems basically to remain static as other conditions change. And "emerge" does not carry with it a "why" or "how," a reason for the change. I prefer "evolve." This term emphasizes that leadership unfolds, develops, and acquires identity and recognition in the on-going group process. It also carries the suggestion that this development results from being better suited to the needs of the specific context, and from being more likely to contribute to the continued existence and functioning of the group. "Evolve" focuses our attention more on group process and less on static personality.

While the outward behaviors of a single person in a specific setting may be the special object of our concern, that focus can result in an incomplete and oversimplified view of a leader. We need to know some of the influences, constraints, available options, and trade-offs contributing to that person's actions and intentions. We need to know something of the effects of past experiences, influences of superiors, the demands of

outside groups, and the imperatives and constraints resulting from larger cultural values.

As a young man Scott was ambitious and wanted advancement in the Royal Navy. He noted that he had "no predilection" for Polar exploration. But he caught the eye of Sir Clements Markham, President of the Royal Geographical Society, who was long interested in Polar exploration and who took vicarious pleasure in gathering funds, choosing personnel, and helping in the planning of those endeavors. Scott saw the effects of chance in all this, "how curiously the course of one's own life may be turned." Sir Clements had strongly held views about the proper modes of Polar travel. He much preferred man-hauling, and laid down as a rule "No ski. No dogs." Should one be surprised if the views of his superior had some effect on Scott's inclinations and decisions?

There were also cultural influences on Scott. Neither ski nor sledge dogs were part of the typical British experience. These dogs were quite unlike the pets Scott was accustomed to. And then there was a general concern at that time that the British were in a period of decline. A chauvinist desire to disprove any such allegation followed naturally. Bowers reflected that desire in his diary, expressing delight that Scott planned man-hauling for the "final dash" to the Pole and back. Although slower, it was sure and "after all, it will be a fine thing to do that plateau with man haulage in these days of the supposed decadence of the British race."

Scott's decision to take five men to the Pole probably was a mistake. All their planning and packaging of supplies for the depots was done on the basis of four-man teams. When Scott sent three members of the support party back and chose five for the Pole a reallocation of supplies was necessary at every depot on the way back by the support group. It meant a more cramped tent for the Polar team, and each day's meals required an extra half-hour to prepare. Why did Scott take four others? Wilson was his closest ally and confidant. Bowers was well organized, strong, loyal and dependable, and could handle navigation. Petty Officer Evans was a lower deck man and Scott wanted one of that group represented at the Pole. A similar desire accounted for Oates' presence for he provided a representative from the Army. But, in the end, these latter two choices, made to satisfy other groups, proved to be disastrous. The point is that there are many external forces, ranging from desire of superiors and outside groups to British cultural values, bearing on the decisions that Scott made as expedition leader.

Another difficulty resulting from the excessive personalization and tendency to focus upon a single individual leader is that it obscures the leadership efforts of others. Edward Wilson was closest to Scott. Whyte, in *Street Corner Society*, discussed the important role of an effective lieutenant for any leader. Wilson filled that role and served often as mediator and truce maker. He acted as go-between in some of the bitterest exchanges between Scott and Shackleton. He was the one person

who could get Scott to rethink a position. He seemed to be respected and liked by all in the expeditionary force. His actions resulted often in improved collective efforts for the group's goals. Wilson demonstrated leadership and was, in fact, a leader. It might be informative to study the leadership of men such as Wilson whose efforts were not confounded by simultaneously holding a position of headship or managership.

## V

As a final topic I would like to consider what Laura Crowell and I called the "inner work" of a leader in our *Discussing and Deciding*. We distinguished between "outer work," all the observable behaviors of a leader as that person interacts with group members, and "inner work," all the cognitive processing which goes on "inside" the leader. Aubrey made less of this, but Weick used the distinction in considering the leader as a two-way medium between external and internal phenomena. Weick discussed the contour gauge as applied to external events to assist perception and information gathering. He also wrote:

*Sooner or later the leader will want to issue commands. Then, but only then, he has to become more internally constrained. If he wants to control in the sense of keeping outcomes constant, he has to be tightly coupled with the environment and loosely coupled within himself. If he wants to command, then he has to become loosely coupled with the environment so that he is not controlled by it and tightly coupled within himself to take action. (p 47)*

When I read "to issue commands" I think more of headship than of leadership. Nevertheless, I believe the contour gauge can be applied internally to get at the "inner work" of leadership.

Outer work doesn't necessarily reveal the inner work behind it. Every teacher knows that some students require gentle encouragement while others do better if pushed and challenged more directly and forcefully. Two students may be treated alike, but for very different reasons. It is in the inner work that adaptation decisions are made. It is difficult, of course, for an observer of external behavior to make correct inferences about internal processing.

We can learn something of inner work from diaries. Scott's diaries present his inner feelings, many of which were never revealed to his companions. Assessments of his team members, his interest, concerns, uncertainties, defensiveness, and self-justification are recorded there. There is always the question, however, of for whom diaries are written. And authenticity can be a problem. Scott's diary was

edited prior to publication by his wife and others to put the best light on matters. A facsimile of the original exists, however, so evidence from that source is available.

The following brief samples may provide a feeling for Scott's diary entries.

*5-8-11 In my opinion the problem of reaching the Pole can best be solved by relying on the ponies and man-haulage. With this sentiment the whole company appeared to be in sympathy. Everyone seems to distrust the dogs when it comes to glacier and summit. I have asked everyone to give thought to the problem, to freely discuss it, and bring suggestions to my notice.*

*5-14-11 There are no strained relations in this hut, and nothing more emphatically evident than the universally amicable spirit which is shown on all occasions.*

*6-22-11 There are some who don't realize how rapidly time passes and who have barely begun work which by this time ought to be in full swing.*

*8-2-11 One continues to wonder as to the possibilities of fur clothing as made by the Esquimaux, with a sneaking feeling that it may outclass our more civilized garb.*

*10-23-11 I don't know what to think of Amundsen's chances. If he gets to the Pole, it must be before we do, as he is bound to travel fast with dogs and pretty certain to start early. On this account I decided at a very early date to act exactly as I should have done had he not existed.*

*12-16-11 We must push on all we can, for we are now 6 days behind Shackleton, all due to that wretched storm.*

*1-5-12 We go little over a mile and a quarter an hour now...What lots of things we think of on these monotonous marches! What castles one builds now hopefully that the Pole is ours.*

*1-7-12 I am awfully glad we have hung on to the ski; hard as the marching is, it is far less tiring on ski.*

*1-16-12 We marched on, found that it was a black flag tied to a sledge bearer; near by the remains of a camp; sledge tracks and ski tracks going and coming and the clear trace of dog's paws — many dogs. This told us the whole story. The Norwegians have forestalled us and are first at the Pole.*

1-23-12 *There is no doubt Evans is a good deal run down...Oates gets cold feet.*

1-24-12 *Wilson and Bowers are my standby. I don't like the easy way in which Oates and Evans get frostbitten.*

2-8-12 *I decided to camp and spent the rest of the day geologising...Wilson...has picked several plant impressions, the last a piece of coal with beautifully traced leaves in layers, also some excellently preserved impressions of thick stems, showing cellular structure.*

2-14-12 *We are inclined to get slack and slow with our camping arrangements, and small delays increase. I have talked of the matter to-night and hope for improvement.*

3-4-12 *I don't know what I should do if Wilson and Bowers weren't so determinedly cheerful over things.*

3-5-12 *One can only say "God help us!" and plod on our weary way, cold and very miserable, though outwardly cheerful.*

3-10-12 *Things steadily downhill. Oates' foot worse. He has rare pluck and must know that he can never get through.*

3-17-12 *My companions are unendingly cheerful, but we are all on the verge of serious frostbites, and though we constantly talk of fetching through I don't think anyone of us believes it in his heart.*

3-29-12 *It seems a pity, but I do not think I can write more. For God's sake look after our people. R. SCOTT*

Other Polar diaries reveal more about interpersonal conflicts. Consider these entries from the diaries of Marshall and Wild who, along with Adams, accompanied Shackleton on his "furthest South" in 1909.

**MARSHALL:**

*Shackleton awakes surly in the morning...He seldom puts his hand to any work, save when a cinematograph is working...Vacillating, erratic and a liar, easily scared, moody and surly; a boaster...He is a consummate liar and a practiced hypocrite...He is incapable of a decent action or thought...Following Shackleton to the Pole is like following an old woman — always pausing...Only three hauling, as Wild is quite unfit for work.*

**WILD:**

*Shackleton and I are pulling at least two thirds of the load. The big hog [Marshall] does not even pull his own food. Adams does little better...Marshall is just as bad again. I could shoot him...If Joyce and Marston were here instead of Adams and Marshall I reckon we should be at least forty miles further ahead...I had thought that with a full belly ahead of us as incentive, Marshall would have done a bit of pulling on the homeward track, but he does not even keep the slack in now.*

*Nearly all afternoon his trace was dragging.*

Diaries do reveal inner feelings. But what I found was largely personal accounts of perceptions — the contour gauge applied outwardly. There was not enough on inner thinking, decision-making, planning for adaptation, planning for leadership. Although it was indirect, I feel I learned more about Scott's headship and managership efforts than about his leadership from these diaries. The British group members (33 in the shore party) were engaged constantly in coordinated activity, ranging from dangerous work in a hostile environment to parties, games, and lecture presentations. But my attention was constantly drawn to their subgrouping. The five-man Polar group never appeared to me to be a single team. My impression of the larger group was of several "loners" completing their designated tasks along side of, but not really with, others. I can see a few, but not many, helping Scott because of his leadership. In sum, I have found the use of the diaries to be stimulating and useful in raising and answering some questions about leadership, but not sufficient for getting at the complete inner work of leadership. I believe carefully conducted confidential interviews in currently available field settings may provide our surest entry to the study of this aspect of leadership.

Several provocative questions could be pursued in considering the "inner" work of leaders and their inward application of the contour gauge. How do they think about leadership? Do they use rhetorical topics in their analysis? How rhetorical is their planning? It must be clear that I see rhetorical analysis as a direction for the study of leadership. The notion of influence in a voluntary setting is a central aspect of most definitions of leadership. That notion lies centrally within the province of rhetoric and scholars of rhetoric should make more of it. For us to fail to use the tools we know so well would be as if Amundsen went South without skis.

Several rhetorical concepts would seem relevant and useful in the assessment of leadership. One could consider apparent and attributed aspects of ethos in describing modes of influence. From my project, working admittedly with indirect data, it was clear that the qualities of ethos in Amundsen and Scott were very different. Amundsen was a more charismatic figure, he could be described as expert and knowledgeable from his

care in planning, searching for the best possible clothing and equipment, and his insistence on testing procedures, and on training. He was dynamic, active, a "doer." He was not an intellectual, but was clever and had a good sense of timing in dealing with others. He had a strong need for the center stage. Scott was quite a different type. He would probably have scored higher on the GRE examination, was sincere, and well-meaning. He was trustworthy. He had less need to be the constant focus of attention and could share leadership, if not headship. He was turned inward, reflective, and self-sufficient. He was reserved and probably too aloof and remote to be able to identify with the range of men under his command. He seemed much less personally in control of his own actions.

If I were studying a contemporary leader, and interviews were possible, I would employ the rhetorical "status of the question." How does a leader determine what are the central issues of a question, and what is the salient issue at the moment? How does the leader decide what is needed and plan specific adaptations? Does the leader build up a repertoire of possible responses which can be surveyed as a list of rhetorical topoi?

Some years ago a graduate student pointed out an obvious parallel between the classical rhetorical modes of proof and the dimensions of group behavior widely used in contemporary research studies.

logical appeal — task orientation, initiating structure

emotional appeal — social-emotional orientation, consideration

ethical appeal — individual prominence, dominance

It is interesting to consider the correspondence of systems developed centuries apart for interpreting human communication. It could well be that insights from the one system will prove to be helpful in the application of the other.

For illustrative purposes, let me touch on one direction an investigation of inner work could take. In Weick's article he suggests that leaders receive more complete information about the issue at hand than anyone else because of the special position they occupy. Again, Weick may be speaking here more of head or manager than of leader as I have used these terms. Weick argues that more information causes these leaders to work with a shorter time focus and consequently to do more shorter range planning. He cites Richard Goodman in arguing that:

*As knowledge gets richer, an organization's focus becomes more short term, and the time horizon shrinks. This shrinkage is predicted to occur because organizations tend to focus attention on areas where progress can be made, and rich knowledge tends to pinpoint immediate targets of opportunity. As richness of knowledge declines, the*

*present is perceived as simpler and the time horizon lengthens.*

*The direct extension of this argument is the prediction that as a leader becomes more medium-like, he will have a shorter time horizon. His attention will focus more on the here and now. (p 51)*

I wonder if more information over more differing positions doesn't lead to an ambivalence that could be interpreted as uncertainty and vacillation. In his diary entries Scott seemed to vacillate, for example, on whether or not the motor sledges would work. On other matters too he seemed to argue both sides of an issue. Perhaps he had enough information on all sides of the question that he was left without a clear answer. When I was a college debater I always was surest of my own position at the beginning of the season. After researching and debating both sides of the question for a year I usually was much less certain. I have experienced similar feelings as a department chair. It has been my observation that those persons with less total information about the full range of relevant topics bearing on a particular issue are usually the persons arguing most strongly for longer-ranged planning.

When much is known about the several sides of an immediate issue it is harder to project ahead for some distance. Thomas Sowell, in *Knowledge and Decisions*, emphasizes the trade-offs, incentives, and constraints involved in any decision making. He comments on the way people often ask "If we can afford to do A, why can't we do B?" If we can put a man on the moon, why can't we ...? Sowell points out that with constrained options the very fact that we did A reduces our ability to do B.

So one question is — will comprehensive information on an issue at hand cause the inner work of a leader to take a shorter time focus? I believe it definitely will for a manager. I think it will for a head. But I am not sure that it will, or must, for a leader.

I have attempted here to work with some of Aubrey's thoughts on the study of leadership, stimulated by Weick's metaphor of the contour gauge and the leader as medium. The conclusions I come to are, first, that the concept of leadership has indeed been oversimplified and has been obscured by being confounded with headship and managership. Greater distinction among these concepts may help us gain an improved understanding of leadership. It could also inform us about the properties of headship and managership. I have hinted that the communicative needs may differ for these various roles of human dominance. More analysis there could be revealing.

In terms of my illustrative case, I would see Scott more as a head, Bowers as a manager, and Wilson as a leader. In my experience in academic departments I

believe the chairs often are separated enough by that role so that departmental leadership can be better provided by others in the group. Aubrey Fisher wasn't a chair but he was a leader. I have seen departmental leaders fill that role less after moving into the chair's position where they met with greater managership and headship responsibilities. We might do well to reverse the approach of most research studies of leadership that combine and treat any combination of these three roles as equivalent.

Second, I think that the concept of leadership has been overpersonalized and overemphasized. We have focused too much on the "great people," and not enough on the dynamic acts of leadership. Too little attention has been paid to the many potent forces, ranging from cultural values to chance events, that influence the process and products of group activity. Partly because leadership has been the label given to every act of prominence in a group too large a portion of the total group output has been attributed to it. I am not sure that we know how necessary, or important, leadership is for effective group effort.

Third, I would like to see more rhetorical analysis of leadership acts. The leadership process as I have defined it cries out for rhetorical analysis, and persons from our discipline should be especially well prepared for that research. George Homans' use of exchange theory may be well suited for the roles of head or manager. The "leader" and follower each give and receive rewards and goods to and from the other. But I believe the rhetorical concept of ethos better fits the role of leadership. William Whyte once spoke of doing something for one of his street corner leaders as "exchange" for all the favors the gang leader had done for him. The leader quickly said, "I don't want it that way! I want you to do it for friendship." The gang leader was pointing to the character of leadership I am suggesting. It is the difference between influence based on ethos and an exchange of rewards and goods based upon power differentials.

Finally, I am suggesting that we seek insights about leadership and communication in fields we have not yet much cultivated. I have been trying to work with historical diaries and data. This approach seems promising to me but there is always the "Huntford" danger—impeccable data gathering, but then an interpretation and presentation of results driven perhaps too much by desires for simplicity, resolution, and dramatic impact. Sir Peter Scott, son of the explorer, made materials available to Huntford but disassociated himself from the work. Huntford wrote in the preface:

*His view is that in order to make a comparative study of Amundsen and Scott it was not necessary to denigrate Scott, let alone his wife. I do not accept that this is what I have done but I greatly regret any distress that my treatment of the subject has caused to Sir Peter or others.*

Nevertheless, Huntford's continuing assertions of Scott's ineptitude, incompetence, "one of the worst of Polar explorers," others "have been court-martialled for less," seem overdone. Huntford declares 1870 as "the manifest start of the collapse of British power. If Scott's birth had been chosen as a symbol, it could scarcely have been better timed." And then, while the general view presented in every other source I have seen is that Scott was the last to die, Huntford says Bowers was probably the last to die. Scott is hounded from birth to death. It seems to me that the facts can often speak clearly enough for themselves. With some reservations then about the execution of this type of study I do see promise and I want to recommend it.

These are some thoughts then about the study of leadership which have resulted from my reading and thinking about Aubrey's paper on the subject. I would like to believe that Aubrey, given more time, would have found them to be consonant with his own and of some interest.

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B. Aubrey Fisher served as a faculty member in the Department of Communication at the University of Utah from 1971 to 1986. He began his professional career as a high school teacher and radio announcer in South Dakota. After receiving his Master's and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Minnesota, he spent four years on the faculty at the University of Missouri.

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