10-1-2016

RESEARCH OF NOTE: BOOK REVIEW Leadership-as-Practice: Theory and Applications, edited by Joseph A. Raelin

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Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

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Leadership-as-Practice: Theory and Applications, edited by Joseph A. Raelin, Routledge, New York, 2016, 296 pp. $39.95 paperback), ISBN: 978-1-138-92486-4

Overview, and the editor's introduction to leadership-as-practice (Chapter 1)

Joseph Raelin, editor of the book Leadership-As-Practice: Theory and Applications, introduces the leadership-as-practice (LAP) approach/"movement," defined as "how leadership emerges and unfolds through day-to-day experience" (p. 3). The book challenges existing leadership theories, practice, and development and proposes instead a model for leadership behavior that is group inspired and not leader led. The book examines the LAP "movement," which allows forces beyond individual personality traits and predilections for traditional individual behavior, to move a discussion of leadership and its research to a more group-centered, reflective, in-the-moment sphere (space) for enhancing leadership and leaders.

Following the editor's introduction to the book (Chapter 1), 12 chapters are presented, written by authors from around the world: Australia, Brazil, Canada, Denmark, New Zealand, Sweden, and Switzerland, with six authors from the United Kingdom, and three from the United States. Several chapter authors indicate that LAP research is probably not generalizable, given LAP's stage of development. In the five chapters (chapters 5, 6, 8, 9 and 10) containing fairly detailed case studies/scenarios, the ability to apply the results of those studies to other countries may be challenging. For instance, in Chapter 10 (Ramsey), there is a case study relating to the use of language and interaction by a consultant for a unit in the United Kingdom's National Health Service (NHS). Since the United Kingdom's NHS differs greatly, for example, from U.S. health care systems, the approaches of health care management consultants in these two countries may vary widely, impacting language, power, and interactions in organizations—all parts of LAP.

While the book is said to be aimed at scholars, in the view of this reviewer, a few of the chapters in the book are so detailed and well researched that the book might be challenging to consume by other than very knowledgeable readers: knowledgeable of philosophy, psychology, organizational dynamics, semantics, and leadership. The book is not for the novice to the field of leadership studies but does have a contribution to make to those who can understand and glean from it the many ways there are to examine one massive topic, leadership—that is, to management faculty and doctoral students in management and organizational studies.

The purpose of the book, according to one of its chapter authors (Carroll, Chapter 5), is to show "what kind of difference a practice approach can make to the study of leadership" (p. 106). The ephemeral nature of the developing leadership-as-practice (LAP) movement is supported in one way or another in each chapter. If one can hold on to the notions and constructs that the various chapter authors offer, a picture of leadership-as-practice emerges as something toward which those who work in organizations, and act as members of groups of any kind, might aspire. The clarity that seems elusive in some of the book's chapters can then come forth, since, as Crevani and Endrissat (Chapter 2) indicate (p. 44), "Reality does not come in discrete units but is—according to a [leadership] practice perspective—entangled and complex."

After the introductory chapter, just summarized, the edited book presents 12 additional chapters, grouped in four parts: Part I, Background; Part II, Embodied Nature; Part III, Social Interactions; and Part IV, Applications.

PART I, Background

Chapter 2. Mapping the leadership-as-practice terrain: Comparative elements, by Lucia Crevani and Nada Endrissat

This chapter intends to guide the reader to the differences among practice, strategy-as-practice, and coordination-as-practice. The chapter appears to be written for researchers and deep thinkers, given that it may be difficult, but instructive, for those new to leadership and organizational studies, even those with a scholarly background. The content is useful, helping the reader to understand what leadership-as-practice is all about.

Chapter 3. The philosophical basis of Leadership-As-Practice From a hermeneutical perspective, by Ann L. Cunliffe and Paul Hibbert

After a relevant discussion of philosophy, this chapter presents three phenomenonological bases for

leadership-as-practice, emphasizing the Heideggerian ("care-ful" leadership practice, in the moment), Gadamerian (leadership as practiced through historical lenses), and Ricoeurian (imagination and creativity emphasized, via emplotment) perspectives. Leadership ethics also is discussed through associating the ethical positions of each of the three hermeneutical perspectives, and the chapter provides interesting suggestions for future research (e.g., using a multiple distributions framework to closely examine the leadership factors of structures, person and practice).

Chapter 4. Democratic roots: Feeding the multiple dimensions of leadership-as-practice, by Philip A. Woods

Relying on the sociological theory of analytical dualism, the author of this chapter examines leadership-as-practice through the prisms of what people do, or what impacts them. He suggests an analytical framework, a "trialectic" process, where structure, person, and practice interact, with leadership as emergent and closely connected to ethics. Two views of the ethical nature of people are proffered: a philosophy of dependence where the leader is followed at all costs, and co-development, where people learn and grow within themselves in order to make the best decisions. Suggesting that dependence encourages subservience, the utility of this ethical basis for leadership-as-practice is rejected, in favor of a holistic view of individuals choosing outcomes, based on the situation at hand and on their own internal strengths and abilities. Discussing the dimensions of the "trialectic process"—structure, person, and practice—the chapter speaks of "multiple distributions" of leadership (e.g., roles, ideas, patterns of relationships) that are "consistent with democratic practices and outcomes" (p. 82). The Multiple Distribution Framework presented in the chapter contains a series of detailed and valuable questions for future research.

PART II, Embodied nature

Chapter 5. Leadership as identity: A practice-based exploration, by Brigid J. Carroll

This case-based chapter is generally easy to follow and rich in connected concepts. The author uses an example of office space layout and team leader behaviors in a fast-paced, medium-sized, high-tech organization to present identity as a component of LAP. Carroll indicates that her chapter focuses on "Locating leadership in observations of interactions" (p. 92) and "collecting 'talk' of leadership practice" (p. 93), suggesting several

ways that leadership identity is demonstrated: how people in organizations "use and move" through organizational spaces; the choice and use of artifacts and objects as part of actions; and through routines, or not, in which people participate, as well as how they react to others' decisions. Developing of leaders is recommended to include insights gleaned from the movement, artifacts, and spaces with a "structurational" understanding of the forging of leadership identity (p. 108). For an interesting linkage to how people react to spaces and how those spaces and their meaning impact behavior, this reviewer suggests that the reader see Norton and DeCelles (2016), "Airplane Design Brings Out the Class Warfare in Us All," in *Harvard Business School Working Knowledge*.

Chapter 6. Who's leading the way? Investigating the contributions of materiality to Leadership-As-Practice, by Viviane Sergi

Materiality is seen as one of the key dimensions of leadership practice (i.e., work and effort, materiality, agency, knowledge, and power) and, as discussed in this chapter by Sergi, materiality (as defined by Cooren, Fairhurst, & Huët, 2012) is "all about actions, values and consequences in context" (p. 294, as cited in Sergi, p. 115). Relying on the Cooren et al. definition of materiality, and embracing a process ontology, Sergi indicates that examining leadership in action through this lens allows it to be seen as a "product of collective interactions" (p. 112). Through a case study based in a Canadian software development company, the author focuses on one aspect of materiality, documents. Through her vignette, Sergi identifies and links specific and important roles (e.g., bringing about team meetings and organizing collective work) that nonhuman actors (e.g., a particular document used by the team observed) can play. Future research around materiality is suggested to include the body, as well as physical space.

Chapter 7. Turning Leadership-As-Practice inside-out and back-to-front: A dialogical-hermeneutical account, by John Shotter

This is a very engaging and comprehensive chapter, showing the connection between dialogic approaches to understanding leadership and what many think of as a desire to identify one general concept for leadership. In concert with other authors in this book, Shotter argues that in-the-moment leadership includes situationally based, open-to-possibilities thinking that is tactful and respectful and listens to others. In an almost lyrical way, the tale of the chapter is woven through

linkages to other authors (e.g., Wittengenstein, Descartes, James, Janis, and Dewey) and another author in this book (Carroll). Shotter does not so much reject other forms of understanding leadership; instead, he suggests that a focus on "good enough," avoiding preconceptions, and engaging fully with others and "otherness" might bring about the possibilities of many forms of leadership, some of them not yet known to any of us.

PART III, Social interactions

Chapter 8. Where's the agency in leadership-as-practice?, by Barbara Simpson

Drawing richly on the writings of Dewey and Bentley (1949/1960), as well as on Mead and Follett, Simpson discusses "what agency might mean" (p. 159) as a part of leadership-as-practice. Examining agency through the framework of self-actional, inter-actional and trans-actional lenses, three different practice perspectives of leadership are described: the leader practitioner, leadership as a set of practices, and leadership in the flow of practice. Using a case study (Kerr, 2013) about a New Zealand football team, the author provides greatest support for the usefulness of the Flow of Practice perspective, also indicating (a) that using performativity as a type of inquiry is preferred to representationalism, an idiom that "focuses inquiry first on entities, and only then on the actions of these entities" (p. 174) and (b) that "relational leadership" is her preferred term for trans-actional practice.

Chapter 9. Developing leadership as dialogic practice, by Kenneth J. Gergen and Lone Hersted

This smoothly flowing chapter is aimed at helping the reader "gain insight into leadership practice by viewing it through the lens of dialogue as practice" (p. 182). The chapter provided dialogic scenarios (i.e., "common patterns of conversations," p. 183), developed by the authors' work for 18 months with 60 participants, working in an institution that provided care for neglected adolescents. It appears that a thesis of the chapter is that leadership as action oriented comes into existence in ways similar to the way in which utterances are recognized as words: that the ways in which humans interact with each other give meaning to the words and the actions that ensue. Describing how these interactions can be generative or degenerative, the authors suggest that role-playing, using scenarios, along with the use of reflection after the role-playing, and also relying on a team of observers, can help participants

reflect on the learning from their role-playing. This reflection-on-action is said to lead to learning outcomes of a heightened consciousness of one's body in interactions, an increase in the ability to recognize more than one perspective in a situation, and "readiness for improvisation" by challenging taken-for-granted assumptions. The chapter is geared to encouraging less conflict and more productive relationships, while also reinforcing psychological principles relating to positive interpersonal relationships, effective conflict management and negotiation, and even common sense.

Chapter 10. Conversational travel and the identification of leadership phenomena, by Caroline Ramsey

The discussion of conversational travel and the theme of the in-the-moment nature of LAP resonate well with the purpose/focus of this book. Conversations are said to "travel" when "participants improvise on the contributions of others, moving conversations in emergent trajectories, along topic lines through conclusions or differences, and via a variety of modes." (p. 198). Ramsey sets out to present a lens for examining leadership relationally "in the practice of the moment-by-moment interplay" (p. 198). Presenting and discussing several interesting conversational extracts from case studies set in the United Kingdom, the author shows how conversations can stay on course, becoming positive or "generative" (i.e., speech or movement in the interaction are accepted), or can decline into degenerative interactions (i.e., speech or movement in the interaction are blocked). What is reinforced in the chapter is that leadership is not demonstrated by individual people, but that leadership emerges in moments, when something said has the outcome of making a difference. Thus, Ramsey ends by defining leadership, with cited reliance on several other authors (e.g., Barad, Kelly, Alvesson and Svengingsson), as "an emergent, ephemeral and socially performed moment that makes a difference in organizing" (p. 216). As in Chapter 9 (Gergen and Hersted), acknowledgment of the contributions of psychology to the concepts being discussed was not apparent.

PART IV, Applications

Chapter 11. Gendered relationships and the problem of diversity in leadership-as-practice, by Jackie Ford

This chapter suggests that the world beyond White, heterosexual, able-bodied males in organizations needs to be explored in relation to LAP and LAP research.

Citing errors in hidden assumptions (e.g., of gender neutrality) of organizational and leadership theories, and related research, Ford identifies the need for a poststructural feminist perspective in LAP. Ford argues that earlier leadership studies overlook the multiple roles and positions people inhabit in organizations, as well as the way that leadership may be viewed, for example, that "has led to the valorization of masculine characteristics and behaviors as the norm, while at the same time pretending and/or assuming gender blindness" (p. 225). Linking the need for inclusivity of all members of society and avoiding the traps of accepting perspectives from earlier, even well-researched, theories, Ford points out the importance of a more inclusive, clearer, and open approach to leadership studies, with emphases on power, knowledge, language, and (inter)subjectivity. The author also points out that even within studies on LAP, there still can be inherent biases—for example, are co-development ideologies really moving away from the established social order? The author suggests that there is increasing interest in critical leadership studies that focus on "plurality, ambiguity, complexity and heterogeneity" (p. 239). To this reviewer, the author makes the case for leadership, and other organizational, scholars and practitioners to open their minds and consider things as they might be, given the relevance of many unheard voices.

Chapter 12. Methodologies to discover and challenge leadership-as-practice, by Stephen Kempster, Ken Parry, and Brad Jackson

According to Kempster et al., L-A-P research should be clear on the ontology of what is being researched (e.g., the unit of analysis); emphasize holistic methodological practices (e.g., use multiple research techniques); and generate theory, especially "process theorizing" (p. 242). Suggesting ideographic research methods (e.g., narrative and conversational analysis), at least in the early stages of L-A-P theorizing, the goal offered by the authors is for theory that is "practically adequate" (p. 245) for leadership practitioners. Citing the challenging research experiences of the strategy-as-practice (S-A-P) movement, the authors caution L-A-P researchers to keep "relevance and rigor in a close-coupled relationship" (p. 249). In order to "reveal" L-A-P, the authors envision research that is ideographic, holistic, and emergent, carried out through narrative and conversational analysis, the critical incident technique, ethnography and auto-ethnography. Cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) is suggested as being useful to examine the structure of L-A-P. The authors conclude by saying it is time to get down to the sometimes tedious business of actually conducting the kind of research for L-A-P that its community of practice has been espousing.

Chapter 13. Doing leadership-as-practice development, by David Denyer and Kim Turnbull James

The authors argue that most leadership development is actually leader development (p. 262), focusing on what ordinary people can develop, in order to become extraordinary. Leader development is said by Denyer and James to engender feelings in the leader development student that she or he must be a certain way and have certain traits, rather than helping the leader-in-learning construct his or her own abilities to deal with complex, boundary-spanning leadership challenges. The authors go on to say that leader development is linked to competency frameworks that mostly look backward on what learners have done, rather than looking forward to what they might accomplish. Denyer and James write that isolation from leadership in action, or practice, might ensue, leaving the learner to think that one size could fit all in relation to leadership learning. An "alternative" to leader development is offered: "leadership in organizational practice" (LaPD) (p. 264), rather than leadership in people. Leadership in organizational practice, according to the authors, might be guided by four principles: (a) reviewing and renewing the leadership concept held by learners and their organizations; (b) surfacing and working with leadership practices and interactions; (c) working in the learners' context on their organizational problems and adaptive challenges; and (d) working with the emotional and political dynamics of leadership in the system. Given that LaPD is a nascent concept, the authors do not dismiss leader development entirely but strongly argue for the move to LaPD, through collaborative leadership learning groups and executive coaching.

Conclusion

This reviewer admires much of the scholarship in the book, and believes that as a result of reading the book, she better understands the LAP movement. Whether other leadership practitioners, researchers, and educators will understand and apply the ideas from the book is not clear, since the terminology in some chapters and the emerging nature of LAP's theoretical and practical linkages are not necessarily intuitive, or even easily understood. Readers also may ask "why now" for LAP? Or they may ask, with what other currently

emerging leadership theories might LAP conflict or blend?

Those readers may want to return to the 1920s, when noted social scientist and management "prophet" Mary Parker Follett wrote: "Different situations require different kinds of knowledge, and … [the person] possessing the knowledge demanded by a certain situation tends in the best managed businesses, and other things being equal, to become the leader at that moment" (as quoted in Tonn, 2003, p. 448).

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