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Leadership as an Art: An Enduring concept Framed within Contemporary Leadership

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Abstract

Purpose

The aim of this viewpoint paper is to refine the meaning of “leadership as an art” in the context of wicked (complex) social problems and in the realm of contemporary leadership research and practice.

Design/methodology/approach

In this paper we explore the meaning of “leadership as an art,” a concept often alluded to but rarely defined concretely. The authors examine the concept by comparing artistic and scientific knowledge paradigms, identifying descriptors of the “leadership as art” concept appearing in the literature and illustrating key attributes of the “leadership as art” concept with real-world examples.

Findings

Leadership as an art is conceptualized as empathetically engaging and normatively uniting people in a vision to promote the common good through collectively formulating an understanding of a complex social problem and its resolution that when courageously and creatively pursued has the potential to make an extraordinary contribution to humanity.

Social implications

The magnitude and complexity of social problems impact communities on a daily basis, making them worthy of attention. History has demonstrated that practicing leadership as an art from a normative power base has the potential of uniting diverse collectives in creatively resolving wicked social problems for the benefit of the common good.

Originality/value

Although leadership as an art has been discussed in the literature over several decades, the term has not been positioned explicitly within contemporary leadership in the context of resolving complex social problems within social networks.

Keywords

Social networks, Wicked problems, Leadership as an art, Constructive dissent, Normative power, Virtue ethics

Leadership is often called both an art and a science (Adler and Delbecq, 2018; DePree, 1989; Grint, 2005; Heffernan, 2012; Nahavandi, 2015; O'Malley, 2012). The references to art suggest the depth of response certain leaders evoke in us due to their insightful practice. As O'Malley (2012) writes, “The best leaders and artists give us perspective on our social condition (good or bad) and greater appreciation of our world, ourselves, and our choices” (para 2). Furthermore, the type of leadership O'Malley (2012) describes often appears when working to resolve complex and chronic social problems, often referred to in the literature as “wicked social problems” (Grint, 2010; Kolko, 2012; Rittel and Webber, 1973).

Interestingly, although references to leadership as an art are generally accepted implicitly, the practice of leadership as an art is not clearly or consistently defined in the literature. In today's leadership environment, such elaboration would contribute to research on social innovation, humanitarian change and creative leadership. Therefore, based on the complementary nature of these conceptual domains, the aim of this paper is to construct a definition of “leadership as an art” in the realm of contemporary leadership research and practice.

The narrative proceeds as follows. First, we clarify the context for leadership as an art by introducing wicked problems as an arena for social change in terms of Grint's (2008) problem typology. Second, we distinguish between leadership practiced as “art” and leadership practiced as “traditional science” in terms of the discovery methods associated with each paradigm. Third, we consider the value of collective leadership, normative power and constructive dissent when practicing leadership as an art. Fourth, we apply virtue theory, including *phronesis* (practical wisdom), to the analysis of leadership as an art. Throughout the paper we use examples of

social change initiatives to illustrate key points that inform the conceptualization of leadership as an art. Finally, we conclude with a summary of the construct and a final discussion of key themes.

1. Context of change: wicked social problems

When considering wicked social problems, interest in Grint's work (2008) is twofold in that he relates the need for an engaged collective to resolve wicked problems, and he identifies leadership practiced as more of an art most suited to these problems (2008, p. 4). Grint (2008) suggests that the way we view the nature of problems may at least partially explain why the majority of changes implemented to solve wicked problems do not achieve the intended results (Beer and Nohria, 2000; Dumon, 2008; McGrath, 2015). He then proposes a typology that classifies the nature of problems in a unique way. The typology identifies the nature of the problem, the ambiguity of its resolution, the primary behavior of the authority, the origin of power that drives resolution and the need for collaboration to resolve the problem (Grint, 2008). This typology is key in understanding why the attributes associated with leadership as an art are best suited to resolving wicked social problems. Table 1 illustrates the problem typology, corresponding attributes and an example of each problem type.

The typology makes it clear that wicked problems are not solved by applying known strategies but instead by novel strategies that are ambiguous and risky, often combining different ways of organizing and perceiving social problems, which Grint refers to as "clumsy solutions," a term that originated from the work of Verweij *et al.* (2006), in that these solutions are often pieced together by applying varying perspectives of a diverse collective. Grint (2008) advocates for coherently reframing wicked problems from different perspectives (individualists, hierarchists and egalitarians) and describes doing so as more of an art than a science. In addition to reframing, the type of leadership most needed for engaging and uniting a diverse collective depends upon normative power, where shared values and vision drive resolution (Etzioni as cited in Grint, 2010). For example, Gandhi, Lincoln and Mandela apply normative power to unite diverse audiences to achieve change. More will be said about each of these actors when socially constructing the definition of leadership as an art.

A significant point that Grint (2010) makes when discussing the typology is that legitimate authority depends upon the ability of the authority function (leadership, management or command) to persuade followers of the nature of the problem (wicked, tame or critical) and the predominate function of the decision-maker (ask questions, organize the process or provide answers) to act on the problem. Cultures that view leadership as heroic and individualistic, such as within the USA, will likely have the most difficulty in adopting the notion that leadership asks informed questions rather than answering them.

Rittel and Webber (1973) are the first to discuss the term "wicked problems" in the literature, identifying several characteristics of them, including uniqueness based upon context; resistance to definitive definition; difficulty of resolution due to entanglements with other social problems; and ongoing dynamics. For example, inequality is a wicked social problem that is unique to the demographics of each community. But what is the root cause of inequality? Is it poverty or is it lack of education or is it income level or is it gender or age or the color of one's skin? It can encompass all of these. Once the correct formulation is discovered, the resolution becomes more evident, which is why social system networks aid in wicked problem resolution as knowledge gained in one social entity may be invaluable to the network as a whole. A combined effort by multiple entities to resolve wicked social problems interdependently leads to resource efficiencies by reducing duplicative efforts and taking advantage of diverse expertise, ultimately leading to improved outcomes in the long run (Stroh, 2015).

Because of the interrelatedness of social problems, number of people involved, resources required, problem dynamics and unbounded timeframes of the effects of both problems and resolutions, there are no permanent solutions (Grint, 2010; Kolko, 2012; Rittel and Webber, 1973). Thus, the iterative resolution is one of creatively doing the best possible with the resources available at the time without resorting to quick fixes (Grint,

2010). “The art of dealing with wicked problems is the art of *not* [emphasis added] knowing too early which type of solution to apply” (Rittel and Webber, 1973, p. 164). Furthermore, quick fixes often make the problem worse (Grint, 2005; Heifetz and Linsky, 2011; Stroh, 2015). Finally, the novel resolutions identified and ultimately selected depend on the authority's credibility, a key attribute needed when working to achieve a unified collective (Grint, 2005; Rittel and Webber, 1973).

Nonetheless, dissent is going to occur within the collective. But dissent is a complement to unity when respectfully and authentically expressed. It leads to further understanding among actors engaged in problem resolution, creating higher levels of thinking that often lead to more creative and more effective outcomes. Part of practicing leadership as an art is participating in and encouraging dialectical discussions within the collective (Collinson, 2005; Fairhurst, 2001) that move beyond the binary dualism of “either or thinking” to that of “both and” thinking (Fairhurst, 2001). This leadership dynamic is more relational and group-based, dependent on fluid, multi-directional social interactions and networks of influence (Collinson, 2005, p. 1422), which ultimately have the potential for problem resolution.

Adam Kahane (2012), an expert in transformative scenario planning for complex problems at the national level, writes that people transform complex problems “through building a strong alliance of actors who deeply understand the situation, one another and what they need to do” (p. 22). Dissent is vital to transformative scenario planning, which includes convening a team from across the system, sharing observations of what is happening, constructing stories about what could be, discovering together what can and must be done and acting together to transform the system (Kahane, 2012). In one such effort, Kahane (2012) describes the Mont Fleur Scenario Planning Exercise designed to help transform the South African apartheid system in the early 1990s. In Kahane's account we see the intentional and intensive interpersonal work of building commitment and trust among group participants and integrating multiple (at times conflicting) perspectives. That collective scenario-planning effort (and other multi-stakeholder initiatives like it) helped to improve the South African political climate in the 1990s. That improved climate supported the work of Nelson Mandela, the South African leader pivotal in transforming the apartheid system. We will say more about Mandela and his leadership style in later sections of the paper.

Finally, we note that targeting complex social problems through a social system approach helps to anticipate and avoid unintended consequences. For example, raising corn to produce ethanol as a cleaner source of fuel than gasoline may result in cleaner air but causes depletion of nutrients in the soil more quickly than most food sources. Furthermore, it raises the price of corn, a major food source for those who have less means to buy expensive foods thereby adding to an already existing social problem. Furthermore, bad resolutions have effects that may be difficult to control (Rittel and Webber, 1973), and those effects involve multiple systems and generally are not time bound; thus, they cannot be measured in the short run. Indeed, one begins to see that having input from multiple perspectives helps to avoid resolving one problem at the expense of creating another within the system. With that complexity in mind, we turn our focus to the artistic paradigm, one well suited to the work of leading wicked social problem change.

2. Distinguishing leadership as an art from traditional science

Science and art are not opposing paradigms, but rather are different and complementary ways of “knowing” and relating to the world (Adler and Delbecq, 2018). Bayles and Orland (1993) state the relationship between art and science elegantly as they write, “What science bears witness to experimentally, art has always known intuitively—that there is an innate rightness to the recurring forms of nature” (p. 103). So, too, leadership research and practice may be construed in terms of “science” and “art” frameworks.

Leadership has generated a substantial body of social science research since the early 1900s (Grint, 2011). The analytic methods used to study leadership span a spectrum of quantitative and objective to qualitative and interpretive. Leadership practice reflects a parallel assortment of applied tools. Leadership as traditional science remains founded in systematic and objective inquiry leading to discovery. By contrast, leadership as an art depends upon a more subjective and interpretive inquiry process to decide how to act in a particular situation (Shotter and Tsoukas, 2014; Taormina, 2010).

Due to how the dynamics of a specific situation are interpreted, leadership practiced as an art is creative and adaptable to the situation. There is no template for its practice. Rather it is highly contextual based upon interpretation colored by past experience and influenced by reason and virtues (Kraut, 2018). Art, in general, applies knowledge acquired in the past to the present situation, and from that comparison, makes an interpretive judgment that considers value conflicts, priorities and, most of all, context (Shotter and Tsoukas, 2014, p. 224). It is the ability to distinguish the past from the present based upon noted contextual similarities and differences, which informs the action to be taken in a particular circumstance, often within a matter of mere seconds. Science, on the other hand, “is about classes of events, not particular instances. Science explains through abstractions that underlie a potentially unlimited number of concrete phenomena” (Hofstadter, 1985, p. 456). Differences between the two forms of leadership (art and science) are evident throughout history. One's ability to recognize and operate from the paradigm most beneficial to the problem at hand is critical to the overall effectiveness of leadership practice. The following example illustrates the differences between paradigms.

Practicing leadership as an art requires creativity and adaptability by using abductive logic, or logic that primarily focuses on *what might be* based upon observation, inquiry and interpretation versus the deductive and inductive logic applied in science, which focuses on *what should be* or *what is* based upon what is already known (Dunne and Martin, 2006, p. 513; Taylor *et al.*, 2018). *What might be* thinking is frequently used by social systems thinkers when resolving wicked problems through social innovation. For example, Nelson Mandela taught humanity the meaning of restorative justice implemented at a national scale for which he earned the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993 (Jamieson, 2013; Kraft, 2014; Mandela, 1993). His holistic approach typical of systems thinking fueled by past experience (what is known from observation and inquiry) and present vision of a united South Africa (what might be) led him to role model social interactions that restored broken relationships between collectives, uniting a country that had been torn apart for decades as a result of dominance, segregation, oppression and violence. On the other hand, Campbell's successful practice of leadership as science (what is already known) led to the discovery of a drug based upon existing research (what should be) given to millions exposed to the pathogen of river blindness, leading to significant reduction of the disease and to Campbell's earning a Nobel Prize in Medicine in 2015 (Ōmura and Tu, 2015).

Both paradigms led to extraordinary contributions to humanity that improved the lives of millions of people. However, Mandela operated from a highly contextual approach, greatly influenced by what he observed as the relationships existing among collectives in South Africa, whereas Campbell operated from a systematic approach influenced by existing research, the preferred method of discovery for natural scientists. Mandela based his leadership of South Africa on observation, inquiry and interpretation while Campbell based his leadership of researchers within the field of parasitology on an existing body of science that informed their discovery. Each approach was most appropriate to the problem at hand, and each resulted in phenomenal leadership outcomes. We now turn our focus to how leadership as an art aligns with certain contemporary leadership perspectives.

3. Contemporary leadership perspectives

Traditionally in the Western world, leadership has been practiced from a heroic and hierarchical perspective. Heroic leadership is attributed to a person, the leader, who is viewed as hero, predominantly based on heroic

acts requiring physical and mental prowess and significant courage (Bass, 1985; Conger and Kanungo, 1987; House, 1977; Shamir *et al.*, 1993; Tichy and Devanna, 1986). From a post-heroic perspective, one that views leadership as a dynamic process shared among a collective (Collinson, 2017; Fredrich *et al.*, 2009; Ospina and Foldy, 2015), people from within the collective may *interchangeably* serve in either leading or following roles at different points in the process.

3.1 Collective leadership

Collective leadership is a relatively contemporary practice in the Western world that is becoming more popular because it serves complexity well by bringing together the diversity in expertise needed to solve complex problems (Fredrich *et al.*, 2009; Okhuysen *et al.*, 2013; Ospina and Foldy, 2015). O'Neill and Brinkerhoff (2018) describe collective leadership as viewing organizations as systems with a structure of connected networks versus a structure of hierarchy. It is through these networks of relationships that decision-making is shared and people are deemed competent and trusted to do the right thing with success dependent upon social interactions that meld diverse perspectives and skill sets (Meadows, 2008; Stroh, 2015). Grint (2010) writes, the significant complexity of social problems that span multiple institutions cannot be resolved by treating them within one institutional framework and the uncertainty involved requires “the art of engaging a community in facing up to complex collective problems” (p. 171). Collective leadership aligns well with leadership as an art, as both are highly relational, contextual, creative and complex – and both primarily operate from a normative power base.

3.2 Normative power

Leadership by definition cannot exist without using some form of power (Levine and Boaks, 2014), whether that be normative, calculative or coercive (Etzioni as cited in Grint, 2010); the choice of power enacted depends upon the perception of the problem one faces (Grint, 2010). The practice of leadership as an art in the context of wicked problems predominantly originates from normative power (refer to Table 1) or that originating from shared values and vision leading to collaboration achieved through developing relationships *with others* versus coercive power originating from dominance or exerting power *over others* (Collinson, 2017; Grint, 2010). Over the long term, relational power, such as normative power, is more influential than power originating from position or dominance (Bal *et al.*, 2008; Ojo, 2015; Singh, 2009).

To further illustrate, when resolving wicked social problems, leadership as an art uses normative power as a stabilizing force that engages and unites the collective in pursuing desired social change while treating members of the collective with dignity and respect. More broadly, practicing leadership as an art engages others in the pursuit of the common good. The goal of any humanitarian vision cannot be achieved solely by the one who best articulates it, but rather by the many engaged and diverse audiences who share it and act upon it. Collectively practicing leadership encourages partnerships based upon shared values and vision, which is the basis of normative power. In this type of environment, leadership as an art comfortably draws upon inquiry to elicit the talents of the collective to work toward problem resolution (O'Neill and Brinkerhoff, 2018; Scott *et al.*, 2018; Western, 2019).

For example, surgical patients have a team of health care professionals caring for them that serve in either a leading or following role at different points in the treatment regime. While the surgeon leads when performing the surgery, nurses lead for certain aspects of pre and post-surgical care as do pharmacists, social workers and therapists. Ideally, the interchangeable roles of leadership and followership throughout the treatment and healing process rely on the competence, trustworthiness and respect for each member in the network of healthcare professionals. The network is then positioned to take advantage of the knowledge and expertise of its professional members in order to achieve optimal patient outcomes.

To follow, descriptive phrases of leadership as an art discovered in the literature identify clues as to what attributes drive these descriptors. Additional historical references illustrate the interpretations made.

4. Virtue, practical wisdom and art

According to Aristotle, we develop virtues as a child and learn to temper them with rationality as an adult (Aristotle as cited in Kraut, 2018). This may be interpreted as practicing virtues guided by practical wisdom for each circumstance encountered. Living life like this leads to achieving well-being or human flourishing, Aristotle's most prized virtue, founded upon internal harmony and rationality (2018). For Aristotle, flourishing is achieved by performing virtuous activities routinely (Kraut, 2018). "Moral virtues are not acquired by gaining knowledge of generalities (through laws, rules, or recipes), for they are to do with how we relate ourselves to the particular circumstances we face each time" (Aristotle as cited in Shotter and Tsoukas, 2014, p. 232). Thus, practicing leadership as an art in the context of social problems requires what Aristotle describes as *phronesis* (virtues guided by reason). Aristotle describes moral virtue as the mean of deficiency and excess, where deficiency and excess represent vices and the mean of the two represents virtue (Aristotle as cited by Swanton, 2018). Thus, virtues guided by reason means living one's life with a balanced mindset, which becomes evident in the following two examples.

Hammerschlag (1993) writes that creating this type of internal harmony (well-being or flourishing) means placing morality ahead of expediency and virtues ahead of objects. As a physician who spent twenty years with the Hopi Indians, Hammerschlag learned from them what it meant to practice both the science and the art of leadership pertaining to healing. Hammerschlag writes:

Scientific insight and clarity will not help us reclaim a healthful balance in life; *it is not the certainty in our heads that will save us but the truth of our hearts* [emphasis added]. What we ultimately know about life's journey is nothing--what we believe is everything. (p. 149)

Experiences such as Hammerschlag's provide opportunities to construct meaning in life by performing virtuous activities over time.

Florence Nightingale's caring for wounded soldiers during the Crimean War helped her construct the meaning of holistic care by providing it over and over again. To this day, holistic care remains the theoretical and practical foundation of professional nursing (History.com Editors, 2020). As with many things, learning to live virtuously comes with engaging in virtuous activities regularly (Shotter and Tsoukas, 2014, p. 232). They become a meaningful part of one's reality.

In the context of social problems, the virtuous practice of leadership as an art means pursuing a perception of the common good. It is not about the leaders, themselves, who practice the art, rather it is about the virtuous work that they do. Thus, the practice of leadership as an art appears highly empathetic toward humanity, for the value of any art is not determined by the artist, but by those who experience the work of the artist. As Naseer (2010) writes of practicing leadership as an art, "As many artists say about their work, it's not so much what they wanted you to see as it is *what you choose to perceive within their construct*" (para. 4). Kolko (2012), an interaction design artist, tells a story about one of his colleagues who placed baby oil in her eyes to gain a better understanding of the "fuzzy vision" her client described. The empathy of artists is grounded in understanding the perceptions of those experiencing their work (Kolko, 2012).

Virtue is also communicated through art (Carroll, 2002; Freeman *et al.*, 2015). For example, the virtue of honesty can be conveyed creatively. Often the goal of art is to expose the uncomfortable by making it highly visible. Photojournalists use provocative photos to create this effect. Extending this lens to human relations, leadership as an art speaks honestly about difficult realities that no one else has the courage to articulate. Facing reality in

this way invites an atmosphere of credibility leading to trust and respect (Lipman, 2018). When describing leadership as an art, DePree (1989) writes that the first job of any leader is to define reality. But leadership as an art does not stop with defining the reality *that is* but goes on to describe the reality *that could be* and works toward achieving it.

Nelson Mandela's leadership exemplifies this type of behavior. Well aware of the brokenness within South Africa, Mandela spoke of its reality openly and empathetically. Thus, he was successful in leading people who were victims and offenders during the apartheid to trust in restorative justice principles on a national scale because they trusted him (Kraft, 2014). Mandela painted a clear and compelling picture of South Africa's healthy future (what might be), and his actions role modeled that vision. We find another example in Gandhi, who openly and empathetically spoke of the reality of Indian oppression while at the same time visioning a free India, not deterring from achieving independence by peaceful means (Biography.com Editors, 2020). Although he conveyed the reality that was, Gandhi also conveyed a compelling vision of what might be, and he lived his life in achieving it, which leads into the final example.

Abraham Lincoln also provides a rich historical example of virtue, phronesis, empathy and normative power. Lincoln, who has been rated as one of the most successful change agents in US history (Govindarajan and Faber, 2016), was a master in courageously engaging others in emancipation. Largely because of Lincoln's success despite humble beginnings, he became viewed as a self-made person, which gave him an enduring connection to common people (Winkle, 2000). This connection became a significant strength that Lincoln exploited whenever he had the chance. Often sparked by self-deprecating humor, Lincoln's avid storytelling added levity to most any situation, further promoting the idea that his humble beginnings and awkward physical appearance made him akin to common people (Donald, 2006; Winkle, 2000). His honesty as an attorney when trying cases and his humanitarian interests made public in his emancipation proclamation while, at the same time, serving in a profession noted for its dishonesty, specifically politics (Holan, 2015), aided him in developing trust with a diverse array of alliances (Donald, 2006; Goodwin, 2005), who he later united to form a collective who shared the vision of emancipation.

Moreover, Lincoln intentionally selected a cabinet of individuals who disagreed with him and with each other, and who were his and each other's political rivals. (Goodwin, 2005). Lincoln thereby increased the quality of the governing process by harnessing conflict – he ensured there would be multiple perspectives at the table.

Lincoln was a master at reframing. Instead of publicly focusing on the divisive topic of slavery, he reframed the root cause of the problem, making it one of inequality and persuaded Allies to do the same. He then connected inequality to a violation of the Declaration of Independence, a historic and monumental document built upon unifying principles of equality and liberty for all. Even during his darkest hours of the Civil War, where Lincoln and his Cabinet became the objects of severe criticism, Lincoln's phronetic judgment (Shotter and Tsoukas, 2014) was for the most part not questioned even by those who disagreed with his policy decisions (Donald, 2006). Thus, his vision of equality for all was a virtue that he pragmatically promoted to engage others in eventually ending the practice of slavery in the US. That pragmatism is illustrated when Lincoln successfully persuaded Thaddeus Stevens, a radical Republican abolitionist, to temper his idealism with practical wisdom (phronesis) as he stated to him, "If in pursuit of your destination you plunge ahead, heedless of obstacles, and achieve nothing more than to sink in a swamp, what's the use of knowing True North?" (Lincoln as cited in Kushner, 2011, pp. 59–60). Thus, Lincoln learned to temper his emotions and the emotions of others around him by acting upon his virtues rationally and pragmatically to achieve unity within diverse collectives.

5. Discussion

The intent of this work was to explore leadership as an art in the realm of contemporary leadership and in the context of complex social problems, differentiating it from traditional science, and identifying its attributes by descriptors found in the literature and illustrating them through historical example. From that work, leadership as an art is conceptualized to be that of empathetically engaging and normatively uniting people in a vision to promote the common good through forming a collective understanding of a complex social problem and its resolution that when courageously and creatively pursued has the potential of making a contribution to humanity that is truly extraordinary. (Please see Figure 1.) Consistent with this definition, the practice of leadership as an art is complementary to resolving wicked social problems in several ways.

First, both leadership as an art and wicked social problem change require developing relationships within the community as the basis for forming an interdependent collective. This collective then creates a shared vision to drive problem resolution by engaging in a normative base of power. Second, practicing leadership as an art is an advantage to resolving wicked social problems in that it connects social entities by helping them collectively envision how they might fully describe a wicked social problem that is negatively impacting not only their respective organization, but the collective as a whole.

For example, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) developed by the United Nations as part of the 2030 Global Sustainability Plan serves as a global model (<https://sdgs.un.org/goals>). Most countries have signed on to the plan. Poverty, a chronic and complex problem, is one of the 17 SDGs. UNICEF estimates 30,000 children worldwide die *each day* from avoidable poverty related causes (Singer, 2011, p. 14) and nearly half of the world population is living on \$2.50 or less per day (Illingworth *et al.*, 2011, p. 3). Moreover, poverty is intertwined with other wicked problems such as poor nutrition, inaccessible health care and inadequate education. The SDGs identify how these problems are linked to one another, taking a transformative scenario planning approach (Kahane, 2012) when addressing them globally while giving each country the latitude to put forward its own action plan. An accurate description of SDG status within each country informs that country's action plan. More broadly, the mapping of all 17 SDGs provides a holistic view of the issues that facilitates discovery of novel solutions that may be shared across the globe.

Third, the successful practice of both leadership as an art and wicked social problem resolution requires empathy often gained through sensitive dyadic social interaction, which is the foundation for effective social change (Kolko, 2012). It often begins at the community level. For example, a dear friend of one of the authors lives in Florida alone. She fell and broke her hip a few months ago. Her family does not live nearby and COVID has made travel difficult. Within a few days following her accident, her neighborhood formed a support group. Someone came by four times a day to walk her dog, Lolli. Others brought meals and provided socialization. She is now well on the road to recovery no longer needing her cane or walker. This community is working together to keep the system in balance during a time when COVID has made life challenging for all.

Finally, the practice of leadership as an art and the resolution of wicked social problems shares the ultimate goal of developing and implementing novel ideas that positively contribute to the advancement of humanity in a significant way. It is predominantly for these four reasons that the relationship between practicing leadership as an art and resolving wicked social problems are complementary and synergistic.

Conceptualization of leadership as an art within the framework of contemporary leadership offers multiple avenues for future research. One lies in exploring how individuals might best develop the attributes described to effectively practice leadership as an art earlier in life. Another avenue is one of identifying what existing leadership theories offer the most potential for the practice of leadership as both art and science within social system networks. A third avenue exists in further developing the technical design tools that assist in decision

making within complex social networks. For this area, one may refer to the recent work of Elia and Margherita (2018).

In conclusion, leadership as an art has a key theme: Connecting with others to make the world a better place. In this time of global complexity, wicked social problem resolution simply cannot occur without such leadership. We intend for this paper to provide conceptual resources for further reflection, research and leadership practice with the goal of making the world a better place. In the words of Rowling's June 5, 2008 Harvard address:

The power of human empathy, leading to collective action, saves lives, and frees prisoners. (para. 33) We do not need magic to change the world, we carry all the power we need inside ourselves already: we have the power to imagine better (para. 44).

Figures

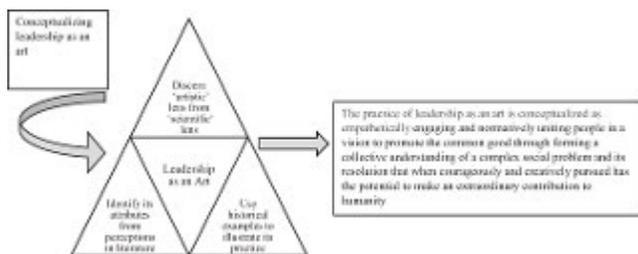


Figure 1 Conceptualizing leadership as an art in the context of complex social problems

Table 1 Grint's typology

Problem type/attributes and examples	Wicked	Tame	Critical
Example of problem type	Inequality in the form of slavery	Pilot landing a plane under normal conditions	Battling a wildfire
Problem ambiguity based upon uncertainty of resolution	High due to complexity of the problem and its resolution	Moderate to little due to previously defined processes	Low based on past experience with similar problems
Authority identified by primary function	Leadership	Management	Command and control
Primary behavior of authority	Ask informed questions	Manage existing processes	Ensure compliance with established protocols
Origin of power (based upon Etzioni's compliance typology as cited in Grint, 2010)	Normative based upon shared values, shared vision and Grint (2010) collaborative goal seeking	Calculative based upon past process with expectation of a similar successful outcome	Coercive/physical based upon need to follow command orders
Need for collaboration (versus compliance) to resolve the problem	High degree	Moderate to little	Little to none

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