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"BAD" LEADERSHIP

2006

Implications of Toxic Leadership for Leadership Development: An Interview with Jean Lipmen-Blumen

By Cara Meixner

In November, I had the opportunity to attend the International Leadership Association (ILA) annual meeting in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Having attended the annual conferences for five years, I

looked forward to this year's focus on *emergent* models of global leadership. From the Latin *emergere* and French *emerger*, the term emergent implies "rising out or up" by way of *buoyancy*. My experiences as a student, scholar, practitioner, and educator cemented my view of leadership as an inherently fluid, amorphous phenomenon laden with paradox. Thus, I became intrigued by the notion of leadership that arises *in and from itself* in the context of a global, networked world.

In the Netherlands, we explored emergent models of leadership in various contexts and venues, some merely theoretic and others practitioner-centered. Ideas, models, practices, and ideologies floated from one session to the next, leaving me with more questions than there were answers. How do these notions of buoyant, emergent leadership transcend the college classroom? Who is ultimately served by such wisdom? In which ways do we make meaning of the practice of leadership in today's connective community? How can we inspire and empower each member of the millennial generation to emerge as responsible, ethical citizens?

My interview with Jean Lipman-Blumen, author of *The Connective Edge*, *Hot Groups*, and *The Allure of Toxic Leaders*, provided space for these questions – and others – to arise.

"It's so important that we educate our students about themselves first."

CM: Greetings, Jean. Thank you for engaging in this interview for the National Clearing-house for Leadership Programs. Let's begin with this question: Why is leadership an area of personal and professional interest?

JLB: Leadership is so crucial today – and it probably always has been. But the lack of effective leadership in virtually every arena of life is so striking. We simply have to put more attention into what constitutes good leadership.

CM: Within the past decade, discussions of "unethical" leadership have surfaced – induced, no doubt, by media and popular culture. In my experience, many college students fear leadership roles and the responsibilities that go along with these roles. How do we begin, as educators, to empower, inspire, and teach "leadership" to our students?

JLB: Cara, it's so important that we educate our students about themselves first.

CM: Self leadership, right? What does that mean to you?

JLB: *Integrity, character, strength, and willingness to speak out* come to mind. [The ability to] resist unethical and illegal practices is [essential] for stu-

Continued on page 2

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

🏠 *Implications of Toxic Leadership for Leadership Development: An Interview with Jean Lipmen-Blumen* by Cara Meixner

🏠 *Citizenship as the Antidote to Toxic Leadership: A Conversation with Paul Loeb* by Emily Perl

🏠 *Famine as Leadership Failure* by Jillian M. Fasching and Douglas A. Hicks

- 🏠 **Leadership Bookshelf:**
- Jean Lipman-Blumen's *The Allure of Toxic Leaders: Why We Follow Destructive Bosses and Corrupt Politicians – and How We Can Survive Them* reviewed by Jennifer Hladun
 - Barbara Kellerman's *Bad Leadership: What It Is, How It Happens, Why It Matters* reviewed by Daniel Tillapaugh

🏠 **Scholarship and Research Updates:** *Ineffective and Unethical Leaders and Their Compliant Followers* by Susan R. Komives and Keith E. Edwards

Connections From The Coordinator

Occasionally, I find myself in conversations about leadership with friends from outside of our profession. I recently had such a discussion with several close friends: the lawyer, the health policy analyst, the economist, and the Naval officer. The Naval officer posed that leadership cannot be taught – implying I supposed, that I should find a new occupation. The group debated the issue at length. While listening to the arguments, it became quickly obvious that this wasn't a debate about what teaching and learning is, but about what leadership is. What makes us define some as "leaders"? A successful end result seemed important to some. If a new health plan or economic policy does nothing to improve the situation, then those involved in forming it were deemed "not leaders" by this group. Motives also emerged in the conversation. If a person wants to occupy a top position at the law firm so they can have the impressive title on their business card, rather than because they want to be in a position to make the firm better, surely we wouldn't call him/her a "leader?" The discussion continued for some time, and it opened my eyes to what those outside of my little world believe about leadership.

In 1978, MacGregor Burns included the assumption of good intentions in his definition of leadership. Many of us have accepted this assumption, and perhaps it has served us well. However, the excellent contributors of this issue point out that if we ignore examples of "bad" leadership (particularly from the political and corporate world) we are missing an opportunity to engage students in discussion and reflection around what leadership is. It is not as if our students don't notice the Kenneth Lays and Jack Abramoffs of the world. Even without relying on national figures, examples of "bad" leadership are abundant. Many of our students know at least one peer who is focused on having a leadership title rather than on accomplishing something for the common good. Rather than ignoring these examples, say-

ing, "Well, that isn't leadership," we could instead use them to provide opportunities to engage our students in important discussions:

- Why do we follow leaders who have selfish motives or coercive means to achieve their ends? When have we, in an act of leadership, challenged a bad leader?
- How can these examples of bad leadership be explained by relational theories of leadership, which call for everyone in the group (not just the positional leaders) to do leadership? Are they examples of bad leadership, or of a lack of leadership from "followers" who should have questioned the bad leader's actions?
- Can we call a person a "leader" if their motives are purely egotistical?
- Is an unselfish motive and focus on the common good enough to label actions "good" leadership, even if the person involved is ineffective or incompetent? In other words, are good intentions enough?
- Is there an example of a self-centered leader actually accomplishing positive ends for the common good while in pursuit of their own power or popularity? What do we make of that?

These are good questions for our students to reflect upon. They are good questions for US to reflect upon also. We hope this issue of Concepts and Connections will give you food for thought regarding your definition of leadership and assist you in developing your own way to use "good" and "bad" examples of leadership to engage students with the topic.

Wendy Wagner

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Coordinator, NCLP

Implications of Toxic Leadership for Leadership Development: An Interview with Jean Lipman-Blumen

Continued from page 1

dents to enter any context, any situation, whether it's the corporate world, government, education, or another sector.

CM: So, how do we begin to "teach" these components of leadership to our students? What pedagogical tools do you utilize?

JLB: I have tried to approach this through a multi-disciplinary or trans-disciplinary way. Often, tools, inventories and self-assessments help students to understand their leadership preferences. It is not just a matter of using inventories but having also a broad understanding of what leadership is about – what integrity means – and what comprises character. Reading literature and going to the theater are two tools. For instance, students might read Richard II and see the play – there are examples on stage of leaders who act in really toxic ways.

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I have taken students to museums to see how leadership is portrayed by artists through different periods of history. The Museum of Tolerance here in LA lets them experience what happens when we tolerate toxic leadership.

CM: Could you tell me more about the trans-disciplinary perspective?

JLB: Yes. In leadership courses, I use novels and philosophy, like the work of Plato. It's also important [for students] to read the works of cultural anthropologists like Ernest Becker, who helps us to understand what it is that drives us as human beings. What do we fall victim to?

CM: I have found that, in tandem, interdisciplinary and experiential perspectives bring leadership "alive" for my students. Would you agree?

JLB: I can't tell you how excited the students get when we provide experiences and examples like these. I took a group of students to Cambridge [University]; we arranged for several Cambridge professors to speak – one was a biographer of Churchill, and he took [the students] to the Churchill archives. Churchill was, at times, an ineffective leader. This experience helped the students understand the fit between the leader and the historical moment. I don't think you can just teach leadership sitting in the classroom. The classroom is an important part of it, but it is fundamentally important to bring students in touch with other ways of seeing leadership. And students talk about [experiential learning] later.

It's something so vivid and unforgettable. It's easier to forget what you read in a book.

CM: Let's zoom out for a moment and talk about leadership on a macro level. You and I recently attended the ILA conference in Amsterdam, which focused on "emergent" models of global leadership. What does this mean, and how does this apply to the next generation of leadership educators?

JLB: An association like ILA brings together theorists, scholars, teachers, students, practitioners, activists and policy makers. You have the opportunity to have this incredible set of conversations with people – where you can test your ideas and where you can learn new ideas, new theories. It's like a match striking flint. And that sets everything ablaze. It's harder to do this in the academy, per se. Yes, we can invite policy makers in [to the college setting]. But

we should create opportunities for leaders in different fields to live in residence – not just to give a lecture and disappear. That situation, if you can create it – in which students have the opportunity not only to read about leadership but to engage leaders in genuine dialogue – is the way that we sharpen theory, sharpen leadership, and sharpen practice. That's emergent.

CM: You've brought up an excellent point. Too often, we bring consultants and speakers to colleges and universities for short lectures, presentations, or workshops. And usually, they're speaking about their successes as leaders. But if we're talking about cultivating integrity and authenticity in our students, wouldn't it make more sense to share individual and collective failures?

JLB: I can't agree with you more. I have been wanting to bring together something along these lines. You see, I got this idea a number of years ago from a former mayor. He was talking about the fact that he had been elected, then defeated, then reelected, then defeated a second time. He said, "You know, I realized that I deserved to be defeated. I came to politics wanting to save the poor and after awhile I began to expect to have the door held open for me." I think he meant that metaphorically and literally. Leaders get seduced by their followers – their constituents – and begin to think that they are more important than the issues that they've represented. I'd like to get Gorbachev in a room with my students, or Jimmy Carter.

Cara, we reflect our leaders from among ourselves. If we recognize that leaders are human beings, we see they have their frailties and vulnerabilities. We have to understand their mistakes. Which [mistakes] are trivial? Which are serious? Leaders are human and we should have capacity to empathize, to forgive, to move forward – not to expect leaders to be demigods, icons of perfection. This does not mean that we should forgo an expectation that leaders live up to standards of excellence, character, legality, and compassion. We tend to look at leaders for technical expertise and, sometimes, are overwhelmed by their charisma. I think if people spent less time working on charisma and more time working on character, the world would be different.

CM: I have wondered, for awhile, why it is that we've been seduced by charisma. Other

Continued on page 4



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Implications of Toxic Leadership for Leadership Development: An Interview with Jean Lipmen-Blumen

Continued from page 3

countries are skeptical of *our* leaders in politics and industry. But character isn't something that gets lost in translation, is it?

JLB: I think character is something we can all recognize [locally and globally]. We might not be able to define it, but we certainly all recognize this when we see it.

CM: Your thoughts give us a lot to consider about the future of leadership studies, Jean. What advice can you offer to educators and practitioners, especially those who are developing leadership programs?

JLB: Well, I have a pet peeve. When we develop and create leadership programs, we don't want to leave our students with a sense of entitlement. That is, that they are entitled to be leaders. I worry about that a lot, and I don't know exactly how to prevent it. It seems to me that if leadership was taught routinely and not to a limited set of students, leadership knowledge and practice would become widely disseminated and not seen as privileges. One other thing – I think that when we teach leadership, the important piece is to teach it as a *problem-focused activity*, not a *person-focused activity*. The problem should be front and center.

CM: So, you're saying that the problem is more important to consider than leader traits or behaviors?

JLB: Yes. The traits of the leader should not be the most overwhelming factor in that land-

scape. It really should be a question of: What are the problems that need to be solved in society?

CM: This sounds like another emergent model – Asking the question of *leadership for what purpose* at the forefront, not the background, of all dialogue and practice.

JLB: As educators, we must ask, "leadership for what?" That is the basic question! It's not about the leaders; it's about the problems that the leaders have to solve. If we can make leadership programs problem-focused instead of person-focused, that would be a very important leap forward. What do you want to *make better* in this society?

CM: I'm also hearing you say that all students – not just an "entitled" few – should be asking and addressing these questions, correct?

JLB: Leadership shouldn't be an elective for a few people, Cara. *We all* have some degree of leadership qualities. [Let's compare] leadership studies to mathematics. Everyone can improve their math skills. Everyone has room to learn. That doesn't mean that everyone who takes math is going to be an Einstein. But we learn to recognize that there are people who, perhaps, are more gifted in mathematics. This is the same with leadership. When we accept the idea [that leadership is learned], it is seen as a responsibility, not a privilege. Otherwise, we are led down the path where we are willing to accept toxic leaders. We see them as being in a different category from then rest of us. We don't put the breaks on [toxicity], because we think [leaders] have special knowledge or a better understanding. That sets us up to accept

As educators, we must ask, "leadership for what?"

leaders who are not only ineffective, but who have a serious negative impact on society – not just on the groups they directly lead.

CM: That impact becomes much more severe in our global, interconnected world.

Perhaps this is why emergent models are of such dire importance.

JLB: Cara, we live in an interdependent world; this is what I wrote about in *The Connective Edge*. We need leaders who understand that we live in this world with seemingly opposing forces. Interdependence calls for behaviors such as collaboration, cooperation, and contributing to [the welfare of others]. Diversity speaks to our uniqueness and to our differences. We need leaders who know how to integrate these forces.

CM: To make a better world for others, not for oneself.

JLB: Absolutely, to make this a better world. ■

Leadership shouldn't be an elective for a few people

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Citizenship as the Antidote to Toxic Leadership: A Conversation with Paul Loeb

By Emily Perl

Paul Rogat Loeb is the author of five widely praised books, including *The Impossible Will Take a Little While: A Citizen's Guide to Hope in a Time of Fear* (Basic Books, 2004) and *Soul of a Citizen: Living with Conviction in a Cynical Time* (St. Martin's Press, 1999). He has written on social involvement for a variety of major newspapers and periodicals and has lectured at over 300 college campuses and numerous national conferences. Recently, Loeb spoke with me about the new literature on toxic leadership and how these ideas connect with his work.

Perl: In her book *Bad Leadership*, Barbara Kellerman claims that, in the recent past (beginning with James McGregor Burns' seminal work in the late 70's), our leadership literature has become "positively disposed." What is your reaction to the assertion that bad leadership has been overlooked?

Loeb: My own writing is focused on social justice constructs, so you always have to look at both the good and the bad. Assuming universal good will is naïve. We must acknowledge the contexts within which leadership and social justice work is practiced. What's happening in the United States right now is the quintessential example of toxic leadership at the top. Our President and top leaders are exhibiting numerous destructive behaviors: lying, attacking enemies, listening only to the people who agree with them, retaliating against anyone who dissents. Their political ads focus solely on attacking the character of their opponents, rather than on addressing real political differences. They state explicitly, as in the NSA wiretapping scandal, that they are

not bound by any laws. Resisting even the notion of accountability, their approach to governing is more consistent with the divine right of Kings than with democracy. This is true, not just of our government, but also in many corporate settings, like Enron. All sorts of people can get seduced by it. At a recent International Leadership Association conference, I heard David Gergen speak. He kept gushing over Bush's "muscular leadership." It struck me that toxic leadership can be attractive to observers—even if it is for dubious ends. People seem to be attracted to a lack of self-questioning.

Perl: Do you think people are attracted to simplicity versus complexity?

Loeb: That's part of it. People are attracted to leaders who proclaim themselves the saviors of the world. This type of leadership can be seductive, even to people who consider themselves intellectuals. Sometimes intellectuals believe that they have the "ear" of power – that the powerful will listen to them. Toxic leadership can ensnare people through a web of power. For example: Mayor Richard J. Daley's machine in Chicago got things done. You got your garbage picked up. But in return you had to support Daley's candidates. This type of leadership uses the power that it has to gain more power.

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In order to oppose this type of leadership, as stakeholders, we have to think for ourselves and take stands on what we believe. The former President of Ireland, Mary Robinson, spoke about that at the same ILA conference where I heard Gergen, describing how the Bush administration pushed her out of her job as United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. You simply have to stand up when that kind of bullying happens, she said. If enough people stand up, that's how things change. That model definitely demands moral courage, but it also creates a far wiser and more humane world.

The only way to oppose power for power's sake is to speak truth to power. I recently visited a restaurant in St. Louis whose owner had an anti-war poster hanging in the window. A woman in charge of outsourcing for a local Boeing plant saw it and emailed him saying: "We won't be bringing our people to your restaurant. Why don't you stick to making food?" The owner responded with a quotation from Eisenhower: "Politics ought to be the part-time profession of every citizen who would... protect the rights and privileges of free people and who would preserve what is good and fruitful in our national heritage." He reminded her that "Restaurateurs in Saddam's Iraq or Stalin's Russia kept their opinions to themselves," and offered to buy

the first round if she and her friends decided to come.

Why is it that so much of our country's elite bought into the Iraq war? Not everyone did. The leaders of every major Catholic group and every mainline Protestant denomination were out front in warning against it. But far too many bought into it—I think because of a reluctance to speak truth to power.

Perl: This newsletter is read by leadership educators. What should the readers be teaching to their students?

Loeb: They need to let students

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know that we will always have leaders who try to manipulate. They need to help students learn to recognize and challenge them. We need to give people the tools to question manipulations of the truth. They're going to come to their own conclusions, that's a given. But we need to be able to talk about these things, and not presume our leaders are always acting honorably.

Perl: Can we learn anything about "good" leadership by studying "bad" leadership?

Loeb: I think we can. Here are some easy lessons we can learn: Don't lie. Tell the truth. Don't be insular. Listen widely. Sometimes we can see both good and bad in the same leader. President Johnson knew there would be a huge political cost when he put all his political clout on the line to pass the Civil Rights Bill. He said the Democrats would lose the South for a generation, which they have pretty much, for almost forty years. But he worked to pass the bill nonetheless. That took huge personal courage, and yet Johnson was also incredibly blind and self-destructive in escalating the Vietnam War.

In my own career, I look more on how citizens can act at a grassroots level. How do people respond to the leaders we have? The danger of toxic leadership is that it convinces people to be silent. It encourages deference where deference isn't deserved. One doesn't have to be lying to practice toxic leadership. You can simply be encouraging people to put blind trust in leaders and follow their directives without question-

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ing. So a major part of our role is to teach people how to question, and then make up their own minds. People (especially students) often think they don't know enough to speak out. I write of a "perfect standard" where unless they're PhD-credentialed experts they don't feel they know enough to ever take a stand. This attitude self-perpetuates: It becomes an internal

cancelor, creating more silence. Most of us, including those of us who teach, aren't leaders on the national stage. But we still have a responsibility to challenge toxic leadership in whatever ways we can — and not to enable it through our silence. If you look, for instance, at how the Eastern European democracy movements overthrew entrenched Communist dictatorships, they did it by acting as if they were free, and speaking their mind even when there was a cost.

In *The Impossible Will Take a Little While* I use the example of former Czech president Vaclav Havel. His country's experience, Havel argues, proves that a series of small, seemingly futile moral actions can bring down an empire. When the Czech rock band Plastic People of the Universe was first outlawed and arrested because the authorities said their Zappa-influenced music was "morbid" and had a "negative social impact," Havel organized a defense committee. That in turn evolved into the Charter 77 organization, which set the stage for Czechoslovakia's broader democracy movement. Later Havel circulated a petition to free a group of political prisoners. They didn't succeed in that immediate task, but when the prisoners got out of jail they said that the actions of Havel and others had

enabled them to continue. The people who signed the initially unsuccessful petition went on to challenge the regime in hundreds of different ways, eventually bringing it down, in 1989, through Czechoslovakia's "velvet revolution." As Havel wrote, three years before the Communist dictatorship fell, "Hope is not prognostication. It is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart."

Perl: Would you put your emphasis on educating citizens versus leaders?

Loeb: You can't separate them. True leadership has to do with engaging citizens. True citizenship has to do with everyone practicing leadership in his or her own way. It's the responsibility of all of us.

Perl: So, if more people followed your exhortation (in *Soul of a Citizen*) to "make their lives count" (i.e., to actively participate in causes which concern them), would there be less "bad" leadership? In other words, is participation an antidote to bad leadership?

Loeb: Yes, absolutely. Active citizens can create a democratic and participatory culture, out of which ethical and accountable leaders can emerge.

Perl: What advice do you have for people who find themselves employed by an organization with a culture of toxic leadership?

Loeb: My first advice: Find allies. Going up against a destructive leader on your own, you're not likely to win. The more allies you have, the harder it will be for the leader(s) to retaliate. Create a common voice. That's why I believe in unionization. At Enron, there was probably some secretary who saw something wrong but didn't speak out, because she knew she risked getting fired. Had the corporation been unionized she'd have had protection. I recognize that most

workplaces aren't unionized. So, in addition to supporting unionization efforts, the next best step is to find allies. Also, don't be afraid to play an inside/outside game. Draw in outside supporters who can levy pressure in ways that you can't from the inside.

The illusion in America is that change happens when people act on their own. In *Soul of a Citizen*, I write about the myth of Rosa Parks. She wasn't just an individual woman who sat down on the bus one day. She had been part of the NAACP for twelve years, was the secretary of the local chapter, and had taken training sessions the summer before at Highlander School, a labor and civil rights center in Tennessee. Parks was part of a conscious social movement. Challenging toxic leadership requires community as well as individual courage. 🏠

Paul Rogat Loeb has spoken and written on social involvement at length, and is an affiliate scholar at Seattle's Center for Ethical Leadership. Visit his website at www.paulloeb.org for information on his books, including free copies of academic exams and classroom study questions.

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Famine as Leadership Failure

By Jillian M. Fasching and Douglas A. Hicks

The popular press often describes famine as the inevitable result of natural disasters or unexpected “acts of God” that upset the local food supply in an agrarian economy. However, famine is more than a sudden event that startles an unsuspecting population; it is a process with a beginning, middle, and an end. There are circumstances that precipitate it, actions that prolong it, and policy measures that fail to ensure that it will not occur again. Domestic leaders find themselves in the primary position to monitor and alter potential famine situations, which typically affect no more than ten or fifteen percent of a population. As much as famine conditions are created by the environment, economics, the developmental level of a country, and other factors, bad leadership also plays a fundamental role. As Robert Kaplan (1988) asserts, famine is “not just an act of God, but an act of humans, too” (p. 10).

Three Types of Bad Leadership

In the context of famine, we analyze three types of leadership adapted from Barbara Kellerman’s (2004) typology of bad leadership: incompetent, negligent, and obstructionist. Within each type, leaders exercise poor judgment and action in the time of famine. Their failures can be examined to understand how more thoughtful leaders can approach food crises in the future and how the international community can offer constructive assistance.

First, the incompetent leader has trouble understanding how to address the threat of famine appropriately. Of the three types of bad leaders discussed, he cares most about the needs of his citizens, but he has difficulty discerning warning signs of famine and determining what actions should be taken. This leader usually has at his disposal, some of the information that is needed to address hunger. Yet, as Kellerman (2004) notes, incompetent leaders lack the “will or skill...to sustain effective action. Some lack

experience, education, or expertise. Others lack drive, energy, or the ability to focus. [They ignore] or discount warning signs” (p. 51). In the case of famine, the incompetent leader may be able to identify individuals who are particularly vulnerable to suffering or name some of its superficial causes, but he is, or perceives himself to be, ill equipped to take action. Consequently, he often resorts to doing nothing.

In order to avoid bad leadership, would-be incompetent leaders must recognize their own shortcomings. Daniel arap Moi of Kenya is an example of an incompetent leader who was unable to address famine domestically, but who successfully worked with the international community to obtain food for his people. In 1984, Kenya suffered a drought that resulted in a large national food deficit (de Waal, 1999). The government, unsure of what course to take, distributed evaluations in several key areas to gain more information. These reports indicated that thousands of people were indeed starving. Knowing the famine was too sizeable to be handled by Moi’s government alone, he set up the National Famine Relief Fund and also “made a comprehensive request for food assistance to international donors. The donors responded rapidly... [and] free food reached 1.57 million people” (de Waal, 1999, pp. 37-38).

Second, the *negligent* leader provides a more difficult case. She may comprehend that famine is occurring, but she does not care to be a part of the solution; she pleads indifference when she learns about a crisis or the unfulfilled needs of her citizens. The negligent leader is callous toward her responsibility as a leader and the people she leads. As Kellerman (2004) describes: “Ignored or discounted are the needs, wants, and wishes of most members of the group.... Too often leaders...get away with callousness toward the very people whose well-being they are supposed to enhance as well as protect” (pp. 119-120).

Negligent leadership was displayed during the Ethiopian famine of 1973. The famine affected two groups of marginalized people, the Oromo tenant farmers and the Afar camel herders. Emperor Haile Selassie “suppressed reports of famine and refused to countenance relief” (De Waal, 1999, p. 107). Haile Selassie’s first priority was the reputation of his government. His administration argued that receiving assistance for its people was not worth the international embarrassment of naming its own impotence. His negligence towards the very individuals he was supposed to protect resulted in mass starvation.

Third, the *obstructionist* leader approaches the worst kind of leadership. Obstructionist leaders conceptualize famine accurately, and then deliberately choose to ignore it. Some obstructionist leaders even perpetuate famine and use it for personal gain. Kellerman (2004) calls this type of leadership “evil.” Evil leaders commit atrocities, using “pain as an instrument of power. The harm done to men, women, and children is severe rather than slight...[it] can be physical, psychological, or both” (p. 191).

The Chinese famine of 1958 illustrates how a leader explicitly manipulated policy to allow starvation to exist. At the time, Chairman Mao was wholly focused on advancing his economic policies. When he received reports that peasants were experiencing decreasing grain stores, Mao accused them of lying and “conspiring to hide grain to demand further supplies from the state” (Becker, 1996, p. 86). Within weeks, petitions begging Mao to bolster grain supplies began arriving, but Mao continued to ignore them. Moreover, when Mao himself started to feel the effects of the famine, he continued pushing his policies and encouraged officials to drain the already depleted grain source further so that he and the top officials would remain well fed. Additionally, he censored the press

so that the rest of the world would not learn about the mass starvation. Consequently, thousands of peasants starved to death.

Bad Leadership and the International Community

While it is not always possible to change the action or inaction of leaders who allow famine to persist, the international community—comprised of governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the international media—can play an important role in forestalling starvation for the individuals who are affected. The exact measures that can be taken depend on the type of bad leadership faced.

In cases where famine occurs and the home government is cooperative, albeit incompetent, the international community can readily respond by sending food aid, which can be channeled to suffering people through relief workers from organizations like the World Food Programme. Members of the international media are also especially influential in times of famine, drawing attention to the severity of the conditions and moving individuals in more affluent countries to donate money or food to relief efforts.

Faced with negligent leaders, members of the international community must think more creatively about ways to transport food to starving citizens. When the home government refuses to cooperate with governments of other countries, United Nations agencies and NGOs can play an instrumental role in providing food and monitoring the crisis. International governments can also apply diplomatic pressure, sanctions, and other measures to encourage negligent leaders to change their behavior.

When addressing obstructionist leaders, international governmental and non-governmental organizations should use the same tactics employed with the negligent leader, but in a

...bad leadership is more likely to occur when there is a weak system of accountability for leaders.

stronger form. Coercive measures are never a first choice, but when required, international leaders must draw upon the economic and political means at their disposal. Under the most severe circumstances, for example, it may become necessary to form a coalition and launch a humanitarian military intervention with the narrow purpose to prohibit the obstructionist leader from perpetuating famine. Certainly, the choice to exercise military intervention carries with it important implications, and humanitarian

military pressure should only be considered after all other policy options have been exhausted.

Lessons Learned

In studying bad leadership in the context of famine, several key points are gleaned. First, bad leadership is more likely to occur when there is a weak system of accountability for leaders. As economist Amartya Sen (1999) notes, “no famine has ever taken place in the history of the world in a functioning democracy—be it economically rich...or relatively poor” (p. 73). Sen attributes the democratic government’s ability to avert famine to the political rights that are granted to its citizens. Specifically, he credits the establishment of a free press and regular elections as two safeguards that help to prevent famine. These measures give leaders a strong incentive to listen and respond to the needs of their citizens. If leaders fail to take heed, they could be censured by the press and removed from office during the next election. Importantly, the free press also acts as an early warning system for leaders, equipping them with the tools necessary to recognize signs of food insecurity and act on them before famine develops.

Second, bad leadership is more likely to occur when leaders hold a large amount of power, and followers hold little power. The ability for citizens to exercise their political rights to make certain that their needs are met is pivotal. Followers

need to be given capabilities to voice their opinions, and have the power to access food supplies.

Third, bad leadership is more likely to result when leaders are forced to address famine independently. This point calls for communication and collaboration. Leaders must know to whom they can turn for assistance, and they must communicate an impending food crisis quickly. In Botswana in the 1980s, leaders appealed to the international community for support, and a famine was averted despite a large drought. This success is attributed to Botswana’s leaders’ ability to recognize signs of famine, acknowledge its magnitude, and ask for assistance. The international community, in turn, took famine seriously and mobilized aid swiftly, avoiding mass starvation.

Famine is often the tragic result of bad leadership. While there are many factors that contribute to famine, domestic and international leaders can play a vital part in averting it. With systems of accountability, empowered citizens, and collaboration on the international scale, good leadership recognizes and prevents famine and its social costs. ■

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The Leadership Bookshelf

The Allure of Toxic Leaders: Why We Follow Destructive Bosses and Corrupt Politicians – and How We Can Survive Them

By Jean Lipman-Blumen • Reviewed by Jennifer Hladun

Henry David Thoreau said, “If one advances confidently in the direction of his dreams, and endeavors to live the life which he has imagined, he will meet with a success unexpected in common hours.” In Jean Lipman-Blumen’s book, *The Allure of Toxic Leaders*, this narrow focus on success is challenged and two types of leaders emerge – those who demonstrate “success” through toxicity and manipulation and those who are able to maintain their morals, values, and ethic of care for others to become non-toxic leaders.

Lipman-Blumen’s book not only explores the nature of toxic leadership, but, perhaps more importantly, the nature of the followers of toxic leaders. Upon reading this text, one finds him or herself acknowledging times when he or she was a victim of toxic leadership at home, at school, in professional life, or from afar as a member of society. Lipman-Blumen uses examples from all of these facets of life to demonstrate the allure of toxic leadership and to indicate the notable advantages and disadvantages of following such a leader.

The *Allure of Toxic Leaders* is comprised of four sections. The first section explores the nature of toxic leaders and provides a backdrop of examples which subsequent chapters draw from.

The second section takes a closer look at the psychological factors that allow followers to fall prey, often willingly, to toxic leadership. Specifically, Lipman-Blumen suggests that there are six primary psychological factors that support followers need for leadership, however toxic:

1. The need to replace authority figures (i.e. parents) with a new leader.
2. The need for security.
3. The need to feel chosen and special.
4. The need for membership in a greater community.
5. The fear of social death or ostracism if one stands out against toxic leadership.
6. The feeling of personal powerlessness to challenge the leader.

In addition, the second section considers the societal influences that allow followers to become “victims” of toxic leadership. Notably, the author discusses the nature of crisis and how it creates a perfect environment for leaders to become toxic and for followers to turn to their existential anxiety to justify following the leader (p. 49).

The third section of the book examines how followers themselves create toxic leaders through rationalization of behavior, through inaction during pivotal moments of poor decision making, or by undermining a leader malevolently, thereby encouraging toxicity in the leader as he or she attempts to maintain power. Lipman-Blumen also considers the roles of, and often insular relationships between, corporate leaders and their boards of directors. Finally, in this section, the role of the media as both a follower and leader is considered as a factor contributing to toxic leadership.

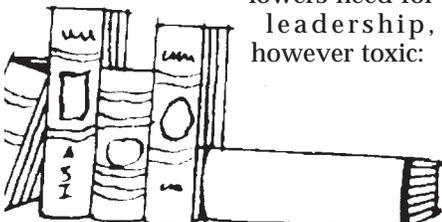
“Lipman-Blumen’s book not only explores the nature of toxic leadership, but, perhaps more importantly, the nature of the followers of toxic leaders.”

In the final section of the text, Lipman-Blumen considers the “silver lining” (p. 187) of toxic leadership and acknowledges that for all of the negative impacts toxic leaders have on followers and organizations, they also serve to help some followers realize their own talents and sense of self. The final pages of the book present information on how to deal with toxic leadership through action and policy change, how to detect potentially toxic leadership, and how to

encourage non-toxic leaders into action.

It is clear that Lipman-Blumen conducted volumes of research through readings, personal interviews, examinations of legal proceedings, and observations in preparation for this book. Although a few examples may lose some Generation Y readers who are unfamiliar with certain historical events or works of literature, most of the examples are exceptionally relevant and current. In fact, many of the outcomes of toxic leadership are being explored in court as of this writing (i.e. Enron).

Perhaps the most exciting aspect of this book was its connectivity to higher education and student leadership. In just the first chapters it becomes very clear how today’s college students fall victim to toxic leaders that exist in their peer groups, academic cohorts, extra- or co-curricular organizations, advisors, instructors, and larger community. Because many college students meet all six of the psychological fac-



tors as they enter their collegiate experience, they are surrounded by a shroud of “existential anxiety” (p. 49) that supports them in looking for, and falling prey to, toxic leadership. As Lipman-Blumen indicates, “We also search for the meaning of life, our own in particular. Followers respond to leaders who help them bear life’s inevitable heartbreaks by lending meaning to what they do” (p. 52).

One area Lipman-Blumen keys into is that followers tend to look to charismatic leaders in times of crisis (be it personal or societal), especially

Notice to Members:

Concepts & Connections volume 12, issue 3 introduced NCLP members to the Leadership Identity Development model (LID).



The grounded theory study that is the basis for the LID model was recently published in the *Journal of College Student Development*.

Komives, S. R., Owen, J. E., Longerbeam, S., Mainella, F. C., & Osteen, L. (2005). Developing a leadership identity: A grounded theory. *Journal of College Student Development*, 46, 593-611.

A PDF of *Concepts & Connections* 12.3 is available to members at: <http://www.nclp.umd.edu/> under “publications.”

when the current leader is unable to move quickly enough. As we consider the ebbs and flows of a college student’s life, it is easy to see how the right leader, at the right time, with the right message (one of safety, security, and comradeship) can pull an unsuspecting, but needy, individual into a web of oppression and additional angst. Furthermore, because toxic leadership is so challenging to overcome without the potential for significant personal liability, this follower risks becoming a pawn of the toxic leader and eventually may forget that there was a better way before this leader.

As Lipman-Blumen closes *The Allure of Toxic Leaders*, she considers the characteristics of non-toxic leadership. This particular section, partnered with some of the examples of toxic leadership that Lipman-Blumen presents, could serve as an excellent reading assignment for aspiring leaders, helping them to consider the role they wish to play in others’ lives as they develop their own leadership competency. Specifically, the author indicates that there are four primary characteristics of non-toxic leadership: an even-handed attitude, a consistent spirit of *ubuntu* or “connective leadership” (p. 244), a recognition of the valuable inconvenience of leadership, and they ask followers to commit to six basic truths. The truths amount to thinking beyond individuals to the larger community; viewing those outside of our traditional community as a part of our own community; taking on the cause(s) of those in our new, larger community; taking responsibility for growing as individuals; establishing meaning in the world; and directing our efforts to create a personal path of autonomy and freedom from society influences. As one considers the wealth of publications that examine the value of self-directed leadership, it is easy to see how Lipman-Blumen’s book provides a thought provoking backdrop to the role of leadership in college and beyond.

As today’s college students look to their advisors and mentors for guidance on what it means to be an excellent leader in today’s tumultuous times, texts like *The Allure of Toxic Leaders* provide a common

language for consideration, conversation, and personal development. As Thoreau suggested, understanding and moving towards your most pure dreams will lead to remarkable success. Lipman-Blumen’s book encourages readers to consider her examples as well as their personal experiences with toxic leadership, and choose to commit to taking the higher ground by engaging in leadership that is based on community development rather than personal gratification. ■

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The Leadership Bookshelf

Bad Leadership: What It Is, How It Happens, Why It Matters

By Barbara Kellerman • Reviewed by Daniel Tillapaugh

As scholars such as Rost (1991) have established, we have not yet been able to settle on one common definition of leadership. Many variations of what leadership means exist within the literature. Yet, since the publication of Burns' (1978) seminal work on transforming leadership, which further established the foundational belief that ethics and morality are intertwined with one's ability to lead, most definitions of leadership have assumed that the outcome of leadership will benefit the greater good and that leaders will have good intentions (Rost, 1991). Kellerman (2004) argues in *Bad Leadership* that we are doing a disservice by putting a necessarily positive framework onto leadership and ignoring the darker side of bad leadership.

Kellerman (2004) identifies seven practices of bad leadership, which lead to failure among organizations and systems. These seven types are:

Using real-life examples of leaders who practiced bad leadership, Kellerman examines what it was that influenced them to act in such a way. She writes, "Leaders are like everyone else. They - we - behave badly for different reasons, and they - we - behave badly in different ways" (p. 18). Leaders are human; thus, they are influenced by their character as well as their own traits. For example, Kellerman highlights the trait of greed. "Greed is likely to be most pernicious when it entails a hunger for power....(In) its more extreme form, a craving for power can be dangerous. It is no stretch to say that the root cause of totalitarianism is a leader whose need for control is all-consuming" (p. 20).

Kellerman (2004) does not place the entire blame of bad leadership with the leader. Followers play a significant role in allowing bad leadership to be practiced. We know from various examples of bad leadership

through history that followers are essential to the leader's practices (consider members of the Nazi party in Hitler-dominated Germany). While acknowledging that there may have been those who were coerced or pressured to follow a malevolent leader, Kellerman argues that there are many examples of those who continued to follow their leader even though they were fully aware of their leader's bad intentions. Group and individual needs influence followers' actions. From a psychosocial perspective, individuals wish to have stability and order; thus, we follow authority, for the most part, in an effort to continue that status quo. Additionally, group needs are influenced by an inherent need for hierarchy and the emergence of a leader through social ranking.

Differentiating ineffective leadership from unethical leadership, Kellerman (2004) explains that both are forms of bad leadership. She writes, "Ineffective leadership fails to produce the desired change. For reasons that include missing traits, weak skills, strategies badly conceived, and tactics badly employed, ineffective leadership falls short of its intention" (p. 33). Unethical leadership, on the other hand, "fails to distinguish between right and wrong. Because common codes of decency and good conduct are in some way violated, the leadership process is defiled" (p. 34). Unethical and ineffective leadership can create an environment where bad leadership and followership permeates every level of the organization and structure.

One of the strengths of Kellerman's work is the wide variety and reach of the examples she uses to demonstrate practices of bad leadership. Drawing from the lives of Adolph Hitler to Bill Clinton, Cardinal Bernard Law to Mary Meeker, Kellerman shows how bad leadership can be practiced in an array of fields and areas, not just pol-

Incompetent	Leaders and some followers do not have the capacity or skill to sustain effective leadership
Rigid	Leaders and some followers are not open-minded, and as a result, are unable to adapt to changing times, trends, and information.
Intemperate	Leaders are unable to control their impulses, and their followers enable their behaviors without intervening.
Callous	Leaders and some followers disregard the feelings and needs of others, especially those without power and privilege
Corrupt	Leaders and some followers practice unethical behaviors that put their own self-interests ahead of what is best for the organization
Insular	Leaders and some followers ignore what is occurring outside of their jurisdiction without considering the needs and welfare of those who are affected
Evil	Leaders and some followers harm others through physical and/or psychological means.

itics or business. This approach encourages readers to consider our own leadership and followership. Do we occasionally lapse into bad leadership? Do we accept the responsibility to be good followers or do we follow blindly? Kellerman's assertion that followers share the responsibility of bad leadership further supports the power that individuals have in a group, how some followers support and enable bad leaders to continue their damaging work. For example, Kellerman devotes an entire section to how followers supported Bill Clinton's insular viewpoints on the genocide in Rwanda. By highlighting the impact of followers on bad leadership, the author demonstrates the interconnectedness of leaders and their followers.

Kellerman's work also highlights action steps for leaders and followers to avoid the traps of bad leadership. As a result, students can make meaning of examples pulled straight from the headlines in order to understand the implications and consequences of bad leadership. Leadership educators will find Kellerman's insightful examples and questions beneficial for engaging conversations and dialogues with their students on the many challenging issues leadership brings to mind.

The concept of bad leadership is relevant to leadership development within higher education. Undergraduate students still have misconceptions about what leadership is. When we as leadership educators insist that the definition of leadership includes only positive acts for

Kellerman (2004) argues in Bad Leadership that we are doing a disservice by putting a necessarily positive framework onto leadership and ignoring the darker side of bad leadership.

reality. Students in higher education today have grown up with political and social scandals. From the Roman Catholic Church sex scandals to genocide in Iraq and Rwanda, to Enron, bad leadership has played a prominent role in our students' lives. By failing to discuss these examples of leadership or to call them something else entirely, we are neglecting the fact that our students can learn from mistakes as well as best practices.

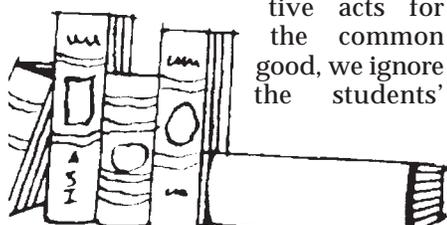
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the common good, we ignore the students'

Scholarship and Research Updates

Ineffective and Unethical Leaders and Their Compliant Followers

By Susan R. Komives and Keith E. Edwards

A search of academic databases and scholarly search engines affirms a dichotomy between management and leadership literature. Significant scholarship is available related to ineffective management outcomes such as inefficiency, low productivity, and poor morale. Research designs that distinguish good and bad leadership often study effective and ineffective managers (usually calling them leaders). These designs frequently include techniques such as asking expert nominators (like a vice president) to identify their best and worst department heads (i.e. leaders). Other designs ask followers (e.g. students) to identify their best and worst leaders (e.g. teachers). Those nominated do not know why they were selected but are invited to participate in a study of various dependent variables (e.g. style, communication, attitudes). Differences between “good” and “bad” leaders/managers are then identified. There is no doubt that there are ineffective managers/leaders but recent scholarship has raised a more complex level of analysis.

Extensive literature on the nature of Hitler’s tyranny led Burns (1978) to refuse to even label Hitler as a leader. Coercion as a method of influence has been widely derided (Rost, 1991). A body of literature has examined the bully on the playground and the tyrant at the office (Bing, 1992). In 1996, Whicker wrote about *Toxic Leaders* describing them as controllers, busybodies, absentees, enforcers, street fighters, and bullies. She asserts that toxic leaders are “maladjusted, malcontent, and often malevolent, even malicious” (p. 11) operating at Maslow’s two lowest levels of survival and security needs whereas trustworthy leaders operate at the highest levels of esteem and self-actualization needs. Further, she credits toxic leaders with organizational decline and immense social costs.

The two recent prominent books highlighted in this issue, *Bad Leadership*

(Kellerman, 2004) and *The Allure of Toxic Leaders* (Lipman-Blumen, 2005), illuminate the dangers in such leadership but go further to encourage followers to be aware of how they enable and promote toxic or bad leadership. Kellerman describes bad leadership as being either ineffective or unethical and identifies a continuum of seven categories of bad leadership ranging from ineffective to unethical: incompetent, rigid, intemperate, callous, corrupt, insular, and evil.

For too long, leadership studies have been focused on what motivates leaders, while more study is needed on why followers follow. Both Kellerman and Lipman-Blumen caution that bad or toxic leaders are enabled by their followers. Lipman-Blumen explores the latter question. She identifies three kinds of followers: benign-both anxious and pragmatic, the leader’s entourage, and malevolent followers. Further she skillfully analyzes both early symptoms of toxicity in a nontoxic leader and “seeds of toxicity within the vision” (p. 223). Hall, Blass, Ferris, and Massengale (2004) explore dysfunctional leader behavior and why it exists in organizations. Their “perspective of accountability and reputation asserts that the risk of a diminished reputation is a form of accountability” (p. 515) and that trust in the leader and leader reputation become a substitute for accountability.

In contrast, contemporary leadership scholarship primarily focuses on the positive outcomes of leadership processes related to values, character, and ethics. This relational, reciprocal approach to leadership characterizes what Rost (1991) labeled post-industrial. The last 20

The new “bad leadership” literature is interesting in that it identifies some of the psychological reasons we as followers want to believe in a strong leader.

years of these post-industrial models led Avolio and his colleagues (2005) to identify “authentic leadership development” as an emerging theoretical perspective. A recent special issue of *Leadership Quarterly*, highlighted the underlying construct of these positive leadership processes and development. This root construct is seen as the necessary basis for other forms of leadership such as transformational, relational, or spiritual. Through “self-awareness, self-regulation, and positive modeling, authentic leaders foster the development of authenticity in fol-

lowers. In turn, followers’ authenticity contributes to their well-being and the attainment of sustainable and veritable performance.” (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 317).

The new “bad leadership” literature is interesting in that it identifies some of the psychological reasons we as followers want to believe in a strong leader. Perhaps our desire to believe in a just and structured world will let ourselves be duped in many ways, often times preventing us from achieving a truly just and structured world, instead promoting dysfunctional and neurotic organizations (Kets de Vries & Miller, 1984). This line of inquiry should be encouraged and could stretch to more analysis of how bad or toxic leaders and their compliant followers promote organizational dysfunction and oppression. The concept of multicultural organizational development (Jackson & Holvino, 1988) may provide an initial guide for this type of inquiry critical to promoting empowering and just organizational environments. To make students

aware of their empowered role as members of groups, organizations, and societies so they can recognize bad leadership and not be compliant with those practices would be a transformation. ■

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