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## Leaders of the future

### Identifying authoritative research in leadership studies

**H**sing-Chau Tseng and Chi-Hsiang Duan, of Chang-Jung Christian University in China, and Hui-Lien Tung of Paine College in Augusta, Georgia, have joined forces to produce a literature overview of publications on modern leadership studies. Their article “Mapping the intellectual structure of modern leadership studies” outlines the research and cross-referencing methodologies they created and followed to produce a series of authoritative sources on this expanding field of research (Duan *et al.*, 2010).

The authors collated, mapped, and cross-referenced 31,232 citations contained in 2,232 articles, published in every issue of *Leadership Quarterly* (LQ) and *Educational Leadership* (EL), over a ten-year period between 1997 and 2006. They used citation and co-citation analyses as their method of research. Through this method, cross-references produce a series of citation “nodes”, from which the most influential publications and scholars in leadership studies could be identified. The over-arching purpose of this research was to produce an authoritative intellectual structure of leadership studies during the specified decade.

#### Literature review

Qualities of good leadership, in any scenario, are difficult to identify and quantify. In the business world, leadership is a central concept in the study of group dynamics, goal orientation, and organizational efficiency. Many studies have been done on the various aspects, opinions, and theories of leadership qualities, including in the following areas:

- Theories of behavioral style, in Lindell, M and Rosenqvist, G. (1992), “Management behavior dimensions and development orientation”, *Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 3, pp. 355-77.
- Transformation or charismatic leadership, described in Bass, B. M. and Avolio, B. J. (1994), “Transformational leadership and organizational culture”, *International Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. 17 No. 3, pp. 541-54.
- Leader-member exchange, in Graen, G. B. and Uhl-Bien, M. (1995), “Relationship-based approach to leadership: development of leader-member exchange (LMX) theory of leadership over 25 years”, *Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 6, p. 219.

A problem encountered by the authors was that this formidable body of diverse information imparted a great deal of knowledge, but this knowledge had to be mapped and quantified. They describe this “knowledge network” of citations and cross-references as being “composed of sufficiently large number of published articles, active researchers . . . and citations appearing in various media”. The key parts of these networks are the nodes,



bridges that connect different or even separate foci in the network. These nodes produce the names of researchers and citations of the most important works in the field.

### Methodology

The authors used a mixture of bibliometrics, based on citation and co-citation analysis, and social network analysis. In the bibliometric research, citation analysis is used to identify influential publications and scholars in the leadership field. Co-citation is a complex method of information gathering that is summarized in this article: briefly, pairs of influential names in the field are identified, and then papers are identified that cite at least one reference to each of a specified pair of authors' names. This information is retrieved using Lockheed's DIALOG to search the online version of Social Science Citation Index (SSCI).

This process had three main stages:

1. Selection of databases and journals in leadership studies. The databases of SSCI and the science citation index (SCI) provided the population for the research, which included a comprehensive collection of 6,000 refereed journals.
2. Data collection and analysis of this material, including authors, topics and citations. The data is "systematized by sorting, summing, sub-totalling, ranking, and screening". The number of articles published between 1997 and 2006 in the two selected journals, and the references these articles cited, were counted, sorted, and tabulated using an Excel spreadsheet. 53 highly cited publications were identified and listed chronologically, and 30 highly cited journal articles were selected.
3. Data mapping, in which the knowledge gained from this research is mapped to "describe the knowledge distribution process" in leadership studies. "Key nodes" from the above analysis were identified and imported to Ucinet software for social network and factor analysis.

### Results

Among the most cited leadership article titles were the following:

- Conger, J.A. and Kanungo, R.N. (1987), "Toward a behavioral theory of charismatic leadership in organizational settings", *Academy of Management Review*, Vol. 12 No. 4, pp. 637-47;
- Lowe, K.B., Kroeck, K.G. and Sivasubramaniam, N. (1996), "Effectiveness correlates of transformational and transactional leadership: a meta-analytic review of the MLQ literature", *Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 7, p. 385;
- Shamir, B., House, R.J. and Arthur, M.B. (1993), "The motivational effects of charismatic leadership: a self-concept based theory", *Organization Science*, Vol. 4 No. 4, pp. 577-94;
- Kerr, S. and Jermier, J.M. (1978), "Substitutes for leadership: their meaning and measurement", *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*, Vol. 22, p. 375; and
- House, R.J. and Howell, J.M. (1992), "Personality and charismatic leadership", *The Leadership Quarterly*, Vol. 3 No. 2, pp. 81-108.

**"The authors collated, mapped, and cross-referenced 31,232 citations contained in 2,232 articles, published in every issue of *Leadership Quarterly* (LQ) and *Educational Leadership* (EL), over a ten-year period between 1997 and 2006."**

**“The techniques used exemplify how norms and trends in a field of study, especially one as large and expansive as leadership, can be understood and transmitted, and then visualized graphically.”**

According to the tabulated results, House, Shamir and Conger were the most cited authors between 1997 and 2006, heading a list of most influential authors in leadership studies.

Further analysis through the co-citation process revealed that many of the authors had very few co-citations, for a number of reasons; for example, either they had had little impact on the development of the discipline, or their work was too recent to have had an impact. Nevertheless, the top 20 authors were identified and entered into a co-citation matrix for social network analysis. The authors produce a series of tables and graphs to demonstrate their findings.

This work has led to the identification and mapping of the most influential periodicals, articles and authors on leadership studies. They have been able to identify correlations in the literature, in order to fine-tune and direct new research into this or divergent fields and disciplines. The techniques used exemplify how norms and trends in a field of study, especially one as large and expansive as leadership, can be understood and transmitted, and then visualized graphically. The final list is given in their conclusion, in which they cite the four emergent concentrations of interest over this ten-year period:

1. effectiveness of leadership style;
2. leadership theory and development;
3. leadership categorization; and
4. the current issues of leadership research.

Finally, the authors supply one caveat to their research: their analysis was restricted to a certain number of leadership journals, excluding other journals that may have included significant work on the subject. Consequently, they encourage further study in leadership studies and the appropriate dissemination of the acquired knowledge.

**Keywords:**

Leadership,  
Leadership development

**Reference**

Duan, C.-H., Tseng, H.-C. and Tung, H.-L. (2010), "Mapping the intellectual structure of modern leadership studies", *Leadership & Organization*, Vol. 31 No. 1, pp. 57-70.

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