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Title

The Cube: an integrated framework for leadership studies curriculum at BA, MA, and Ph.D. levels.

Presentation track: Research paper

Abstract

Leadership Studies, as an emerging academic discipline, must make curriculum and pedagogy decisions with an eye toward discipline unity. Acknowledging this, the faculty of Leadership Studies who are responsible for three different levels of education crafted a mutually beneficial curriculum framework which has three dimensions that form the bare bones of our program philosophy, curriculum structure, evaluation rubrics, and commitment to praxis.

Biographical Information of Authors

Dr. Heather Crandall is the chair of the Masters Program in Communication and Leadership Studies. Her interdisciplinary Ph.D. is from Washington State University. Areas of concentration include American Studies, Communication, and Rhetoric. Heather teaches courses in theorizing communication, visual rhetoric, organizational communication, public speaking, small group communication, and interpersonal communication.

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Yes, please print this proposal in the conference proceedings, if accepted.

No, please do not consider this proposal for a poster if not accepted.

The first author is not able to serve as a reviewer. However, the second author, Josh Armstrong, will serve as a reviewer.

Yes, I am willing to serve as a session facilitator at the conference.

THE CUBE: AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK FOR LEADERSHIP STUDIES CURRICULUM AT BA, MA, AND PH.D. LEVELS

Introduction

Within academia, there is a growing movement toward exploring leadership studies as a discipline of study through developing leadership curriculum, expanding course offerings, and creating majors, minors and degrees around the study of leadership (Zimmerman-Oster & Burkhardt, 1999). Gonzaga University, a Jesuit institution, offers programs in leadership studies at the B.A., M.A. and Ph.D. level. The rapid growth of the study of leadership in academic circles during the past forty years has spawned an array of approaches to the teaching of leadership. This has given rise to many definitions of “leadership” and many different types of “leadership programs”. We are at a critical point in clarifying the scope and foundation of the ongoing scholarly dialogue that is necessary to understand and integrate leadership studies.

Offering such a variety of leadership programs at different levels is sometimes challenging. Below is a scenario that illustrates this challenge: Walking down the main classroom hallway in the Tilford Center at Gonzaga University, one notices that there are three classrooms being used. In one classroom about twenty-five young, traditional age undergraduates sit on pillows placed around the space as the teacher reflects on a slide projected behind him. The slide contains this quote: *The best test of servant-leadership is: do those served grow as persons? Do they, while being served, become healthier, wiser, freer, more autonomous, more likely themselves to become servants? And, what is the effect on the least privileged in society; will they benefit or, at least, not be further deprived?* The subject of the undergraduate course is servant-leadership, and the quote is by Robert Greenleaf (1978), the individual who originally coined the term.

In the next classroom over, a group of fifteen graduate students sit in traditional desks arranged in a circle. The majority of graduate students are working professionals in a variety of organizations, and they take courses in the evening after work. In each of their hands is a piece of paper that contains the same quote by Greenleaf (1978) that was projected on the screen in the undergraduate classroom: *The best test of servant-leadership is: do those served grow as persons?* This is also a course whose subject matter is, in part, about servant-leadership.

Across the hallway there is a classroom which has eight people sitting around a seminar table. Coming from a variety of backgrounds, both academically and professionally, these are doctoral students participating in a seminar. On the white board at the head of the table is written, *The best test of servant-leadership is: do those served grow as persons?* The topic for this doctoral seminar is servant-leadership, the same subject that is being engaged by the group of M.A. students and the group of B.A. students on the other side of the hallway.

Questions of level and depth and pedagogy confront these faculty who share hallways, meetings and resources. How does one topic such as servant-leadership serve as the focus of learning at three different academic levels? Would students who earned their B.A. degrees from Gonzaga, who went on to earn their M.A. degree, and then continued on to complete their doctoral degree, be presented with new learning each time they registered for a course on servant-leadership? The situation calls for careful decision-making at curriculum and program

levels. What are the differences in student learning goals at each level, and how do these goals inform how teachers structure their courses? What 'content' sits behind the overarching theme of (in this example) Servant Leadership? What is the most effective way to teach and learn about this topic? These are the questions that this paper will examine as they point to a larger problem; the exploration of leadership studies as an emerging academic discipline.

Background

Leadership studies as a discipline continues to struggle with disparate interpretations and formulations of leadership, leadership studies, leadership development, and leadership research. While some (e.g., Northouse, 2004; Sternberg, Antonakis, & Cianciolo, 2004) have made laudable efforts at pulling the field together, others have observed (e.g., Chemers, 1997; Harter, 2006; Yammarino, et al., 2005) that the lack of a definition of leadership and its domain of study, has made it difficult to achieve a methodological coherence.

Other interdisciplinary fields experience similar issues. Reflection on these struggles helps identify crucial elements to consider when strategizing and theorizing a way out of the field's definitional and theoretical thicket. One example is found in Turner's (2006) recent analysis of sociology as a discipline:

...a strong discipline reveals a number of properties: consensus over epistemology, common view of the nature of the reality to be studied, agreed upon research problems, agreed upon methodologies, common discursive forms, accepted theories as the best explanation of phenomena, accepted and cumulative bodies of knowledge, control over professionals' access to research funds and journal outlets for scholarly work, control over prestige-giving, credentials, and career tracks. (p. 24)

Leadership studies as an emerging discipline still must develop these basic properties as articulated above and in our view must certainly begin with a discussion of epistemology. As will be argued below, current trends in leadership education demand that we understand basic assumptions about leadership prior to engaging in its study.

The Gonzaga University leadership studies programs are making an effort to unify the curriculum such that our assumptions about epistemology, reality, and the meaning and value of our work are both shared and continually critiqued. In order to facilitate this unification we have developed a hybrid framework that draws from each of our departments' fundamental theory and curriculum constructs. The effort here serves to work toward a theoretical and practical set of ideas that have potential to both bind programs together within our individual curriculum structures as well as integrate a wide variety of theoretical and methodological perspectives. This process of program's finding their own identities and engaging in curriculum review is ongoing in our School and by no means a smooth and conflict free process. Engaging in this work has surfaced for all of us valuable points of sameness and difference that are making our individual programs stronger and our collective identity as a School more clear.

Description of the Practice

The following is an overview of how the hybrid framework, with the three dimensions that form the bare bones of our program philosophy, curriculum structure, evaluation rubrics, and commitment to leadership praxis, works.

Content

This frame or dimension is meant to capture that broad movement in western thought that has historically both integrated and fragmented what Wilbur (1998) calls the Value Spheres. These ‘spheres’ cohere in western thought as investigations into being (ontology or what a thing ‘is’), knowing (epistemology), and valuing (axiology). Our content domain is an effort to make sure that we adequately incorporate the sense of these modernist categories through a rigorous vetting of our curriculum content through the filters of understanding what a particular element of knowledge ‘is’, how it is ‘known’ and what is its ‘value’. It should be noted, however, that we are aware that this perspective is but one perspective (albeit a powerful one) and our School in general is committed to staying on the leading edge of literature and theoretical advances in postmodern, post-structural, and posthumanist thought (Barad, 2007; Cooper, 2005). Our content frame emerged from the authors’ dialogue as *seeing clearly, responding ethically and serving willingly*.

- If, as an overall goal, we can guide students toward an ability to see problems and possibilities, theory and practice, individuals and social structures from a variety of perspectives, they will be able to see more clearly.
- If, as an overall goal, we can guide students from a position of clear seeing to the next place, a place that requires an examination of response, we can offer ways of thinking to arrive at an ethical response.
- Finally, our assumption is that when an ethical response is seen clearly, one is compelled toward a willingness to serve others. These content categories make up one dimension of the hybrid curriculum framework.

Context

This dimension is meant to capture relevant topics and issues in leadership studies that support a meaningful and workable strategy toward defining and working competently with a ‘unit of analysis’. On the way to this simplification we have divided our subject matter and focus into three broad areas. These areas or domains correspond to the individual, group, and collective level of human experience and are useful in planning courses and developing curriculum. At the individual level we can study our own felt experience of being present to one another (Altman & Rogoff, 1987; Benhabib, 1992; Brothers, 1995; Griffin, 1989; Holstein & Gubrium, 2000; Mingers, 1995). We can investigate our own stories (Bruner, 1990), histories, and personal narratives (Sparrowe, 2005), and the ‘objective’ views of rational and naturalist thinking on the nature of the individual person – including the brain, mind, and body as a whole.

At the group level we begin to study literature in organizational science, group process, and the myriad ways that human beings collaborate and work together to meet their individual and collective needs (Argyris, 1993, 1999; Cooper & Burrell, 1988; Mead, 1934; Hayek, 1945; Schein, 1997, 2004; Weber, 1958). We are particularly attentive to how the conversation around leadership changes when we move from the personal to the organizational or group dimension.

The widest view in the Context dimension is large groups and collectives -- the global perspective. Scholarship here is filtered through the lenses of policy studies, history, political science, economics, and the full sweep of academic disciplines devoted to understanding the 'whole' (Eitzen & Baca Zinn, 2006; Hawken, Lovins, & Lovins, 1999; Stone, 2002).

It is the integration of these perspectives into a coherent framework that grounds a fruitful and generative discussion about the discipline of leadership studies. These distinctions also each suggest an affinity with areas within the Content dimension discussed above (see the graphic of our 'cube' below for examples of how these domains can possibly intersect). Our curriculum is designed with an eye to making sense of the Context domain through study of relevant Content materials that reflect the wholeness of human beliefs, knowledge, and values.

Process

Our developing views on the process dimension encompass the increasing interest of human inquiry into the dynamic, complex, and emergent nature of the world and our experience. Literatures in, for example, sociology, complexity science, organization science, and philosophy reflect the processual and contingent nature of 'reality' (Emirbayer, 1997; Stacey, 2001; Rescher, 1996).

For us, the Process dimension guides both theory development and pedagogy at the BA, MA, and PhD levels and our efforts to understand the phenomenology inherent in our ongoing participation with each other, with students, and with our larger community. Like the other components of the hybrid curriculum framework, the Process dimension has three domains: empowerment, collaboration and dialogue.

Empowerment is a key goal of undergraduate leadership education. Power and the use of power (Barton & Tusting, 2005; Freire, 2000, 1992; Giddens, 1979; Illich, 1973, 1971) are central questions in leadership studies and are a core element of our curriculum. From a teaching and learning perspective we are focused, particularly in our undergraduate leadership program, on the goal of learners, students, and candidates all experiencing their own power as individuals, thinkers, and community members. This requires a recognition by faculty and administration that institutional constraints and opportunities affect the individual learner in a myriad of ways that require ongoing reflection and discernment regarding the gap between institutional intentions and outcomes (Kerr, 1995). It further asks of us that our methods and curriculum reflect a widespread shift in instructor based, place based, and 'mastery' of content approaches to education.

From the undergraduate perspective, the goal is that students understand and apply a useful conceptual framework of leadership studies, and feel capable of operationalizing leadership in specific situations, as well as understanding, critiquing, and responding to the leadership of others. The undergraduate at graduation, therefore, has found her “voice”—i.e., the individual feels that she has something to offer society. She is able to articulate and defend her meaning in the context of other students articulating and defending different meanings.

Collaboration is a key goal of graduate leadership education. It goes without saying that human beings are social and that living, working, and being with others is a vital part of human experience. In civil society the expectations are that people will get along and collaborate with skill, sensitivity, and good purpose. Our general approach to a collaborative and participatory social matrix is both theory and practiced based. From Aristotle’s notions of practical wisdom (phronesis) to the ethic of care articulated by Nell Noddings (1984, 2006), the challenge, opportunity, and necessity of people working together in harmony are fundamental to an education in leadership studies. The ubiquitous and rapid evolution of social networks in contemporary global cultures is astonishing (Shirky, 2008) and the increasing ability of scholars to understand those networks (Fuhse, 2009) makes understanding the nature of collaboration imperative.

In the specific context of graduate leadership education, collaboration describes the desired identification and relationship with a community of scholars. The graduate student in leadership studies enters her program of study with a clear sense of the efficacy of her own voice, and leaves with commitment to the value of understanding and engaging with different voices in the conversation. The student can expand her processing of the different arguments to develop a synthesis that includes relevant literature written by scholars in the appropriate field of study.

Dialogue is a key goal of doctoral leadership education. Building on the choices, skills, and habits of empowerment and collaboration, it is our belief that human beings are capable of deep and sustained conscious interaction with each other that extends beyond habitual behaviors and assumptions, divergent or convergent world views, or a self or other centered emphasis on relationality. This type of intentional and serious engagement with the ‘other’ can be understood as dialogue (Bohm, 1996; Grudin, 1996) and requires a number of related capacities and skills. Qualities of mindfulness, equanimity, resilience, and courage are needed for a pedagogy of dialogic relationality. A chief prerequisite for dialogue is a resolve to stay in conversation and contact with the ‘strange’ other. Dialogue is most concentrated as a practice at the doctoral level.

For doctoral level education we encourage and facilitate the development of skills associated with a dialogic view of the world. Core to these skills is the recognition of and participation with the emergence of shared meaning in interactions. Through the cultivation of respect, profound listening, and a deep awareness of one’s own biases we seek the ideal of continuous reflection in the Jesuit tradition embraced by Gonzaga University.

There are 27 elements in this model. Each element represents a discrete categorization or location in the model.

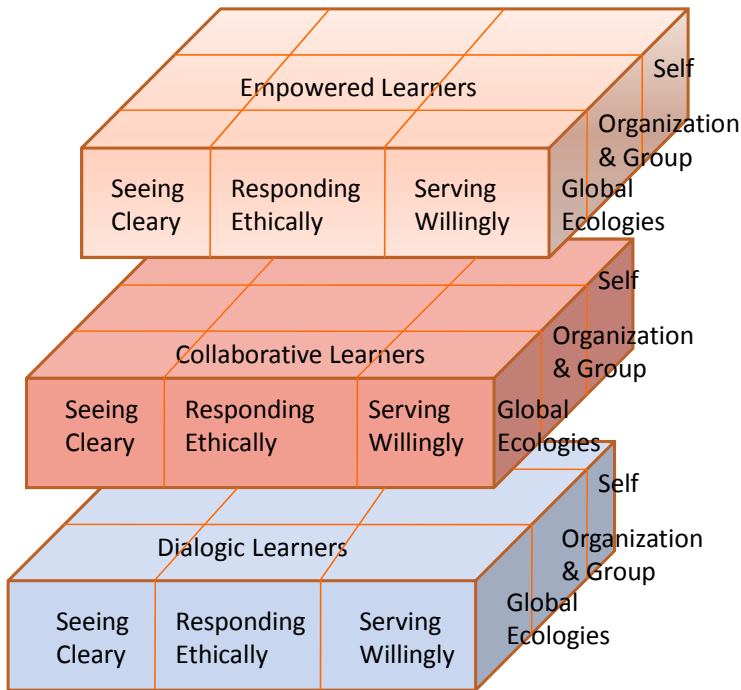
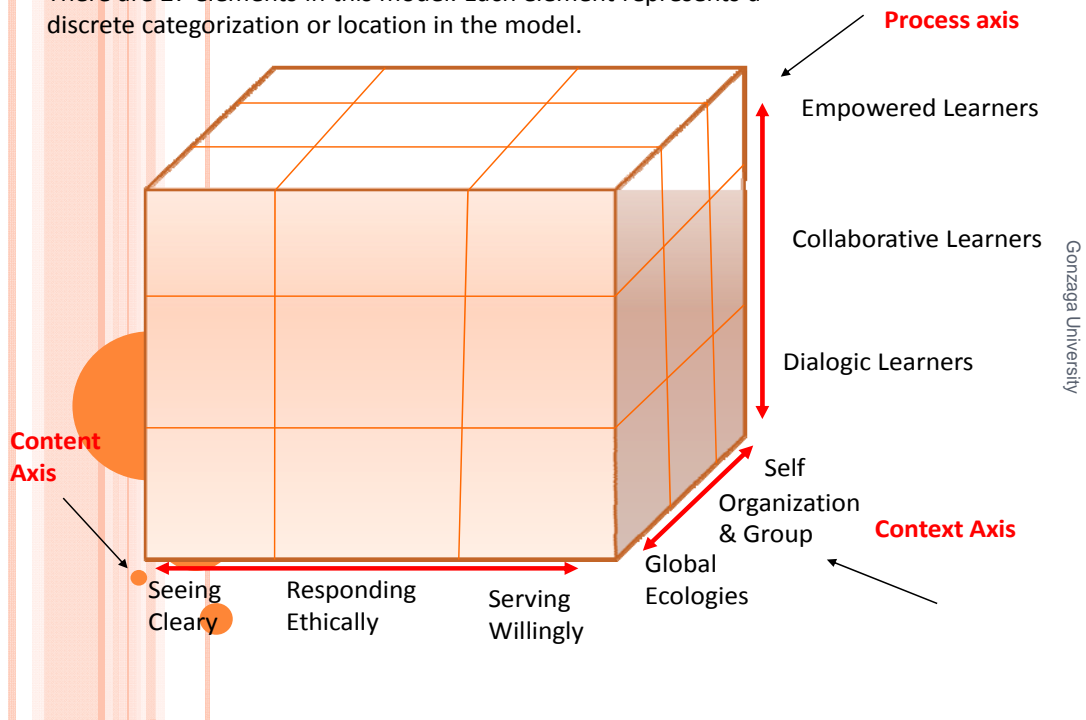
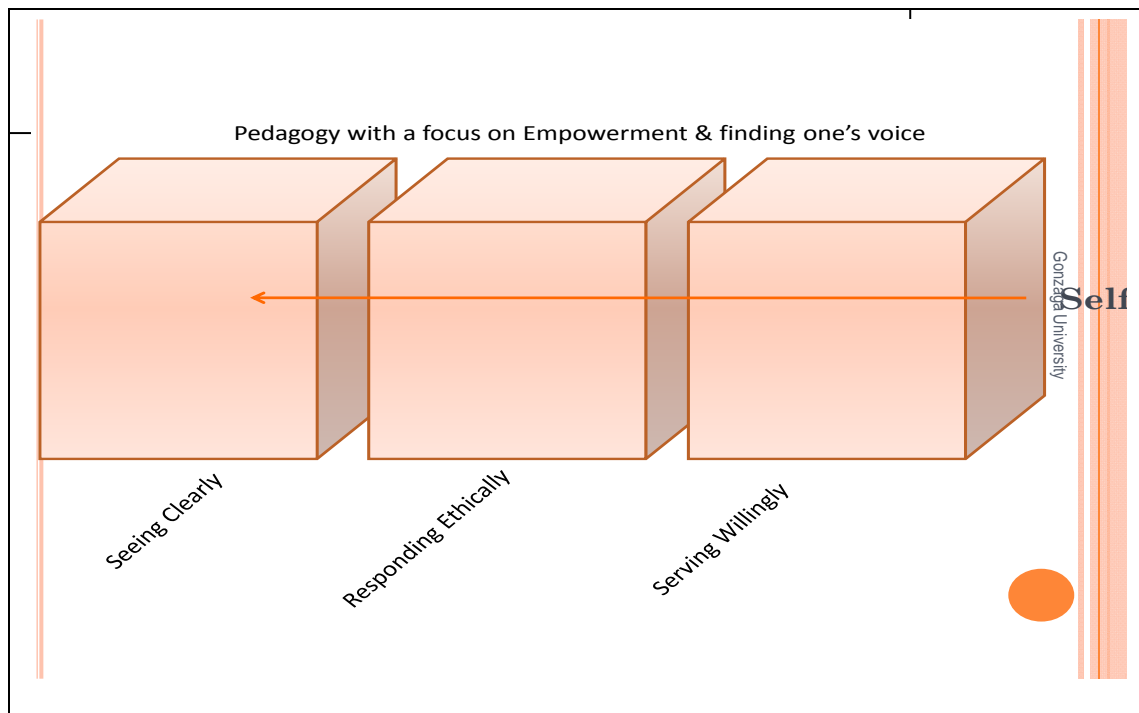


Figure 1: The Cube: Each axis orients us to the components of the model



This course meets in 4 hour blocks approximately 2 time per month for 8 sessions. The sessions are divided into large and small group dialogue, group work presentations, and commentary by the professor. The course is done in a quasi-seminar format with an emphasis on interactivity.

Dialogic Pedagogy

Curriculum Goals & Outcomes

Syllabus

Texts & Readings

Methods

Schedules

Staffing

Etc.

Seeing Clearly, etc.

The content focus of the course is to relate leadership theory to a primary locus of the self – in doing this we trace connections to the organizational and global dimensions of leadership. We also focus on finding robust theory to carry the need for pragmatic and empirical work forward into the complex fields of organizational and global phenomena. The heavy emphasis on theory is one of the primary vehicles for **seeing** the field **clearly**. There are also elements of ethical response and willing service in the readings and the dialogues. Servant Leadership is introduced and related to the theoretical perspectives of Reed, Bruner, and Wertsch.

Self

Example: DPLS 700 Leadership Theory

Required Texts

Bruner, J. (1990). Acts of meaning. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Greenleaf, R. K. (1977). Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power & Greatness. Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press. 25th Anniversary Edition.

Reed, E. S. (1996). The necessity of experience: Yale University Press.

Wertsch, J. V. (1998). Mind as Action. New York: Oxford University Press.

The Nature of Leadership. (2004). Antonakis, J., Cianciolo, A.T., & Sternberg, R.J., (Eds.). Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Wren, J. T., Hicks, D. A., & Price, T. L. (2004). Traditional classics on leadership. Cheltenham ; Northampton, MA: Elgar.

Other readings assigned (and provided on Blackboard)

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Figure 2: We can drill down to increasing specificity in terms of course content

Beyond understanding her own meaning of the experience, and beyond a reasonable synthesis of the different meanings emerging from a group, the doctoral level scholar can identify what is missing in the articulated meanings, as well as in the synthesis. The scholar can find other voices to bring into the dialogue. The scholar can create a new theory that transcends the synthesis of diverse meanings and seeks to probe beyond the constraints of ordinary consciousness. The starting point may be empowerment, and a key marker on the journey may be collaboration, but the destination of leadership studies, we believe, is dialogue.

Applying the Model

As mentioned above, leadership studies is a young and interdisciplinary discipline in a state of flux. The field can be found at various places and at different levels across colleges and universities. It is not uncommon to find an undergraduate leadership program in a business school and at the same institution, an MA in leadership in a school of education. The curriculum framework of content, context, and process made up of seeing clearly, responding ethically, serving willingly at personal, organizational, and global foci and toward empowerment, collaboration and dialogue, has a unifying guiding potential.

We are hopeful that this model will be useful for curriculum committees and leadership teams. Within this framework discussions of course content or program goals can commence with a set of guiding questions. If a faculty person would like to offer a new course, colleagues have a way of talking with that faculty about how the proposed course fits the program goals or what differentiates the level of the course from those in other programs. Conversations of this nature build a culture of consistency, accountability, coherence, depth and satisfaction. The conversations, while fluid and adaptable, may sound like this: Is your course more focused on the personal, global, or organizational? Or, how does the use of the same leadership textbook differ within the context of undergraduate and graduate level goals?

We also intend to use this framework to map or keep track of course development and application. Courses in a given program can be mapped to the framework to find overlapping course competencies or missing course competencies. One leadership course may focus on the personal while the next course in a sequence may focus on the global. In this situation, the framework helps a person consider that he or she may need to offer a leadership course with an organizational emphasis. For example, a capstone course could be added with a focus on personal, organizational, and global perspectives of an issue in leadership studies with assurance that these concepts would be familiar to students. Conversely, the framework is adaptable to fit existing courses to program goals. For example, after mapping a program's curriculum to the framework, the whole program may emerge in a new light and can perhaps be more clearly articulated. For example, a young leadership program might be able to see after mapping courses to this framework, that the program is more about the organizational perspective and more about serving willingly than it had originally thought.

Locating courses within the framework also allows faculty a way to consider other perspectives for decision-making and/or understanding student concerns. Why do students avoid certain classes? Without the framework, a person may run through the usual list: course topic, the ratio of number of courses offered and students enrolled, and teacher preference. With the framework, we have another perspective with which to examine problems and opportunities.

Our experience with these ideas at Gonzaga are in their infancy. We have developed this thinking through a series of conversations and meetings with a small group of department Chairs and have made two significant presentations to the entire faculty. After much feedback and review we have begun work to more intentionally work with the model as a guide to course and program development. As indicated above this process is not without its difficulties. Engaging a heterogeneous (we are an interdisciplinary group of communications scholars, educators, psychologists, sociologists, etc.) faculty in a conversation about these larger institutional and theoretical issues is challenging. We will report back on our progress!

Conclusions

The foregoing suggests an integrated framework and model that clarifies content, context, and process dimensions of leadership studies. This framework is the start of a unifying 'boundary object' (Star & Griesemer, 1989) capable of accommodating in leadership studies the variety of disciplines, orientations, perspectives, and world views that make up this still fragmented field. As the field grows, we will need theoretical frameworks and models to help us unify the wide variety of knowledge and information that is Leadership Studies. We hope that this model furthers the conversation on the development of these kinds of tools.

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