MAPPING THE LANDSCAPE OF SHARED LEADERSHIP: A REVIEW AND SYNTHESIS

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As can be seen from the substantial increase in the volume and scope of leadership publications over the last ten to fifteen years, leadership is a construct with important social and relational properties. Shared leadership in particular has attracted considerable attention from organization and management scholars, although there has been surprisingly little focus on the key structuring processes and mechanisms that enable shared leadership. The aim of this paper is to rectify this by identifying the critical factors and mechanisms which enable shared leadership and its antecedents and outcomes, and to develop a synthesized framework of shared leadership. The paper closes with a brief discussion of avenues for future research and implications for managers.

From Privileged Towards Shared Leadership

Over the last few decades, the adoption of shared leadership practices has been fueled by various forces, including intensified cycles of change and technological complexity, which imply that decisions made by a single leader will often be insufficient. This in turn has affected the contemporary organizational landscape, which has changed from being predominantly hierarchical to displaying a variety of configurations, ranging from intra-organizational ad hoc and/or horizontal structures to inter-organizational multi-firm networked clusters (either physical or virtual) of firms (Anand & Daft, 2007). Such organization arrangements often are not built upon a centralization of power and vertical chains of command associated with traditional hierarchies. Rather, they evolve around common interests, objectives and responsibilities. In such settings, coordination and mutual dependency operate in ways that make it difficult for any single decision-maker and/or firm to monopolize power or authority. Thus, from the perspective of the individual member of an organization, shared leadership involves increased participation in organizational decision-making processes and can be defined as "a simultaneous, ongoing,

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mutual influence process" (Pearce, 2004, p. 48), "in which there can be several (formally appointed and/or emergent) leaders" (Mehra, Smith, Dixon, & Robertson, 2006, p. 233).

Overall, Pearce and Conger (2003) define shared leadership as "a dynamic, interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the objective is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals of both" (p. 1). However, there is an abundance of different definitions of shared and distributed leadership in the extant literature as table 1 illustrates.

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Table 1: Selected Definitions of Shared- and Distributed Leadership in the Literature since 1988, ranked according to the ISI Web of Science Article Citation Index

Code[a]	Authors	Definition / Concept	Sum of times cited[b]
DL	Gronn, 2002	Key defining criterion is conjoint agency (or concertive action, which are steps initiated by one individual and developed by others through the circulation of initiative) (p. 423). A distributed understanding is well aligned with the processes through which work is currently articulated as part of an emerging and ever-changing division of labor, due to task differentiation and reintegration. (…) new workplace imperatives are generating qualitatively different forms of interdependence between organizational personnel and that these have stimulated the adoption of distributed modes of work coordination (p. 425).	77
SL	Denis, et al., 2001	Strategic leadership as a collective phenomenon to which different individuals can contribute in different ways (p. 810). [Collective leadership means] not only multiple actors, but also a certain division of roles among them (p. 811).	69
SL	Pearce, et al., 2002	Distributed influence from within the team (p. 172) Lateral influence among peers (p. 176)	68
SL/DL	Haward, et al., 2003	A number of leaders within the team that is plural, democratic, or distributed leadership (p. 21).	49
DL	Spillane, et al., 2004	[DL] is the activities engaged in by leaders, in interaction with others in particular contexts around specific tasks (p. 5). Rather than seeing leadership practice as solely a function of an individual's ability, skill, charisma, and/or cognition, we argue that it is best understood as a practice distributed over leaders, followers, and their situation (p. 11).	42
DL	Day, et al., 2004	DL teams as a function of the processes associated with people working together to accomplish shared (p. 858). Team members participate in the leadership process, i.e., it is a shared, distributed process that creates a capacity for versatility and adaptability (p. 859).	33
SL	Sivasubramaniam, et al., 2002	Collective influence of members in a team on each other (p. 68). How members of a group evaluate the influence of the group as opposed to one individual within or external to the group (p. 68).	30
SL	Pearce, 2004	SL occurs when all members of a team are fully engaged in the leadership of the team and are not hesitant to influence and guide their fellow team members in an effort to maximize the potential of the team as a whole. Simply put, SL entails a simultaneous, ongoing, mutual influence process within a team that is characterized by "serial emergence" of official as well as unofficial leaders (p. 48).	29

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SL	Ensley, et al., 2006	Team process where leadership is carried out by the team as a whole rather than solely by a single designated individual (p. 220).	22
SL	Carson, et al., 2007	SL as an emergent tem property that results from the distribution of leadership influence across multiple tam members. It represents a condition of mutual influence embedded in the interactions among team members that can significantly improve team and organizational performance. (p. 1218) SL is a relational phenomenon involving mutual influence between team members as they work toward team objectives (p. 1220).	21
SL	Mehra, et al., 2006	Shared, distributed phenomenon in which there can be several (formally appointed and/or emergent) leaders (p. 233).	16
SL	Pearce, et al., 2005	SL entails a simultaneous, ongoing, mutual influence process within a team that involves the serial emergence of official as well as unofficial leaders (p. 134).	11
DL	Woods, et al., 2009	Descriptively, then, DL allows for the possibility of plural sources of workplace influence (i.e. 1+leaders), and a range of modes of co-ordination and role interdependencies such as spontaneous collaboration between actors, synergistic partnerships (p. 440). DL is not generally thought of as a normative concept, in the sense that DL might be advocated as desirable, or construed as an ideal mode of practice (p. 441).	-
SL/DL	Hosking, 1988	Groups differ in the degree to which they value particular means, such as "distributed leadership," and this will also influence the nature and frequency of their negotiations (p. 160). (…) shared sense of social order, and therefore shared understandings about helping, reciprocity of exchange and so on. (p.162)	-

*Notes: a) * SL = Shared Leadership, DL = Distributed Leadership b) according to the ISI Web of Knowledge, data retrieved on the 12th November 2010*

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Distributed leadership has been referred to as situations where leadership functions are shared (Brown & Hosking, 1986). Collective leadership in turn is here referred to as a leadership process in which a defined leader, or set of leaders, selectively uses skills and expertise within a collective, and effectively distributing elements of the leadership role as the situation or problem at hand demands (Friedrich, Vessey, Schuelke, Ruark, & Mumford, 2009).

Furthermore, there have been a multitude of approaches to the study of collective and shared leadership, including a focus on: partition of control in relation to joint ventures (Choi & Beamish, 2004; Rodriguez, 2005) and mergers and acquisitions (Wulf, 2004); social psychology and social movement organizations (Brown & Hosking, 1986); upper-echelon theory on top management teams (Carmeli, 2008); strategic change perspectives (Denis, Lamothe, & Langley, 2001); new ventures (Ensley, Hmieleski, & Pearce, 2006; Ensley & Pearce, 2001; Ensley, Pearson, & Pearce, 2003); socio-political perspectives on gain-sharing organizations (Collins, 1995); and discourse (Koivunen, 2007) and social network analysis (Mehra et al., 2006). Furthermore, as can be seen from table 2, a variety of concepts have been used interchangeably in the literature, which tends to cause confusion rather than clarity.

Table 2: Different concepts of collective forms of leadership in the literature

Concept	Author(s)
Shared cognition	Ensley & Pearce, 2001
Distributed leadership	Barry, 1991; Brown, et al., 2002
Participative leadership	Bass, 1990, in: Carte, et al., 2006; Collins, 1995
Relational leadership	Uhl-Bien, 2006
Participatory management	Wu, et al., 2001
Concertive action	Gronn, 2002
Collective leadership	Denis, et al., 2001; Hiller, et al., 2006
Collaborative leadership	Finch, 1977; Vangen, et al., 2003
Collaborative governance	Huxham, et al., 2000
Informal leadership	McCrimmon, 2005
Emergent leadership	Pearce, et al., 2000
Co-leadership	Sally, 2002
Dual leadership	Etzioni, 1965; Etzioni, et al., 1968
Split management	Choi & Beamish, 2004
Connective leadership	Klakovich, 1994, 1996

Despite the interest shown by organization and management scholars, surprisingly little attention has been given to the underlying organizational processes and mechanisms that enable shared leadership. Although scattered information is available in the existing literature, very few papers have tried to produce a more complete picture. The aim of this paper is threefold: to show, that the field of shared and distributed leadership is truly an interdisciplinary field, which has spread to many different fields; to identify critical underlying mechanisms which enable shared or collective leadership and to identify the antecedents and outcomes of shared leadership according to the literature review to develop a synthesized framework for managing the organizational issues associated with shared leadership on various organizational levels.

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The remainder of the paper is structured as follows. Section 2 explains the methodology and terminology used in this study. Section 3 presents an analysis (including descriptive statistics) of the extant literature of collective and shared leadership. Section 4 presents a more detailed and focused analysis of the phenomenon of shared leadership from an organizational perspective, which identifies the main enabling mechanisms, followed, in section 5, by a synthesized framework of shared leadership, its major antecedents, coordinating mechanisms and outcomes. The final section discusses the limitations of the paper, its managerial implications and directions for future research.

Methodology

The aim of the review strategy adopted was to identify and categorize as many relevant and credible theoretical and empirical studies on collective leadership as to provide an overall conceptual clarity. The literature review was inspired by Brush (1992) and follows the guidelines set out by Hart (1998).

The primary source of the review was the ISI Web of Science (WoS), but the references were also cross-checked with the EBSCO, JSTOR and ELIN databases in order to include potential highly cited and relevant articles that may be published in journals not covered by the WoS. A Boolean (Boole, 2009 [1854]) search was carried out in title, key words and abstract including the following terms: "shared leadership," "distributed leadership," "distributive leadership," "collaborative leadership," "dual leadership," "co-leadership," "collective leadership," "connective leadership," "delegative/delegated leadership," "shared management," "distributed management," "participatory management," "shared governance," and **"**democratic leadership." While it is recognized that there may be some overlap between research focusing on team leadership and management, a cross-check revealed that, of the 224 publications using the term "team leadership" and "team management," only seven were actual duplicates of the papers selected for this review (i.e. Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007; Court, 2007; Faraj & Sambamurthy, 2006; Hiller, Day, & Vance, 2006; Jameson, Ferrell, Kelly, Walker, & Ryan, 2006; Sanders, 2006; Sivasubramaniam, Murry, Avolio, & Jung, 2002).

The initial search resulted in a total of 899 references (title, name of journal, ISBN, authors, keywords and abstract). To ensure scientific quality, the search was restricted to publications that had undergone peer review and been accepted in international journals with a traditional anonymous peer-review process. This criterion thus excludes articles published in national journals as well as books, book sections and conference proceedings from our search, which resulted in a total of 426 articles that met the peer review criteria. The abstracts of these 426 articles were then examined and discussed by the authors, which resulted in the exclusion of an additional 155 papers that did not address the topic of shared leadership in any detail but still somehow met the search criteria (a complete list of papers is available on request). Finally, an analytical reading (Hart, 1998) of the remaining 271 papers was carried out and these papers were systematically coded and categorized.

The analytical reading and coding was carried out according to a reading guide which contains 14 pre-defined categories as shown in table 3. Most of the categories contained sub-categories. For example, the category for "Research Design" contained the sub-categories "Nature of Study" (e.g. Empirical or Theoretical), "Research Design" (e.g. Experiment, Case Study, Survey, etc.). The reading guide ensured a consistent coding as well as the ability to code articles thematically.

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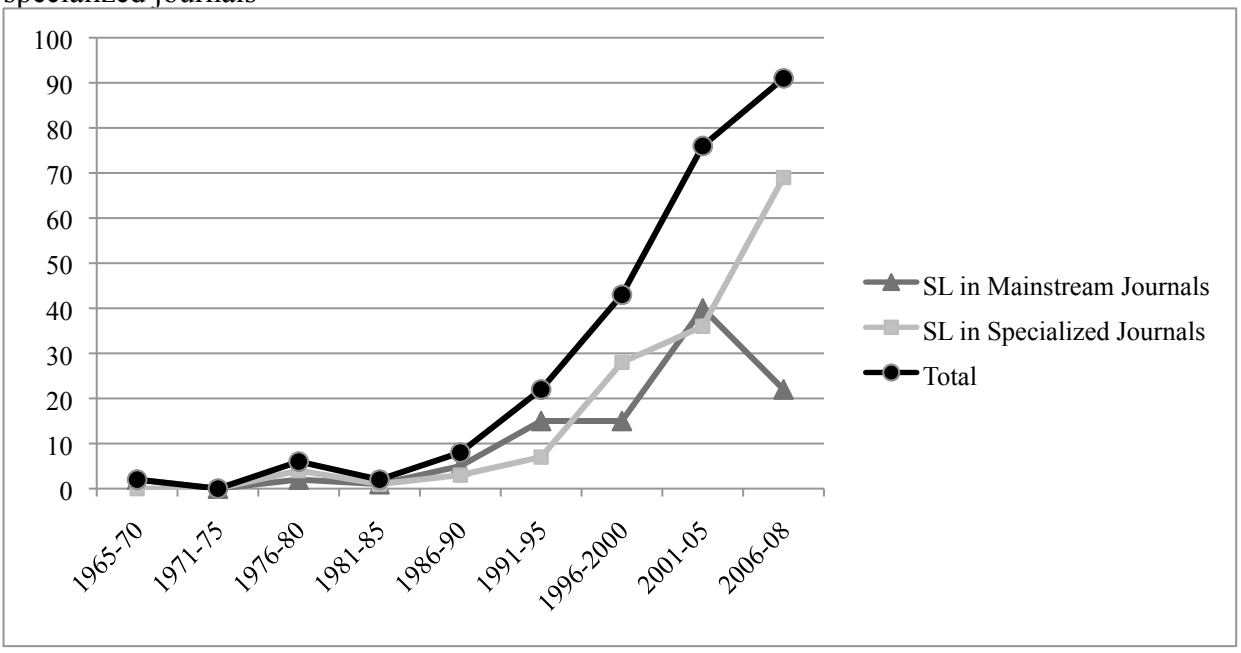
Table 3: Reading Guide

1	Publication type	8	Type of study
2	Authors	9	Research design
3	Year of publication	10	Main theme
4	Title	11	Sub-theme
5	Journal	12	Central issues and purpose of the study
6	Academic field / Setting	13	Mechanisms enabling shared leadership
7	Origin of the empirical data	14	Brief resume of the main outcomes / results

Collective, Shared and Distributed Leadership Research: A Taxonomy

In figure 1, the total population of peer-reviewed papers in mainstream (high-impact) and specialized (low-impact) journals in the period of 1966-2008 has been tracked and categorized. The evaluation of mainstream and specialized journals was carried out by researchers in the respective academic disciplines (e.g. Organisation/Management, Health Care or Education).

Figure 1: Growth in the total number of publications (1966-2008), split between general and specialized journals



As can be seen from the growth in the total number of publications, there has been a rather slow development in the field from the mid-1960s up to the present decade. And although there has been renewed interest in shared leadership since the late-1990s, this appears to be relatively equally distributed between contributions to general and more mainstream journals (within Organisation/Management, Health Care or Education respectively) and more specialized journals. This indicates both elements of an emerging field (typically published in new and/or

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more narrow and specialized journals) and a field approaching maturity (typically published in established and/or more broadly focused journals).

There are trends in the distribution of both theoretical/conceptual contributions and those that are primarily empirical in nature. Whereas the former are normally associated with abnormal science (Kuhn, 1962; 1970), the latter contain properties of normal science, i.e. they are concerned with carrying out tests and/or replicating existing studies. This distribution is shown in table 4 below.

Table 4: Distribution of contributions according to their disciplinary origin

Academic field / Setting	Code	Number	Percent
Organisation, Management, Economics	ORG/MAN	78	29 %
Health care, Hospital, and Nursing management	HEAL	74	27 %
Education and Educational Research	EDU	69	25 %
Public Administration (local and national)	PUBL/COMMU	26	10 %
Interdisciplinary studies	INTER	23	9 %
Law	LAW	1	0 %
Total		271	100 %

Origin of the empirical data in the literature

Journal		Number	Percent
Anglo-Saxon Countries (incl. Ireland)	Total	155*	87 %
(*of which 117 of 155 are USA)	ORG/MAN	31	
	HEAL	50	
	EDU	42	
	Other	32	
Europe (excluding UK)		8	4 %
Rest of the world		15	8 %
Total		178	100 %

Note: The table includes only empirical publications. The origin of the study refers to where the primary data was collected.

The distribution of papers according to their theoretical or empirical nature, thus, helps the assessment of the maturation of a field. Analyzing the extent to which an area transgresses disciplines allows for concluding whether the area in question indeed can be seen as a distinct field of inquiry or as a theme that is relevant to many disciplines and sub-disciplines. Moreover, new or young subfields seem predisposed to be conceptual in nature, aiming at introducing preliminary frameworks, definitions and taxonomies. In terms of methodological heterogeneity, the use of different quantitative and qualitative methods indicates both the degree to which the research is confined to tight paradigmatic constraints, and thus dominated by testing and replicating existing insight and studies, and the degree to which a subfield is open to different

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and/or new methodological approaches, which is characteristic of fields with little or no paradigm dominance.

As can be seen from table 4, more than half of the articles use empirical data, which are both, of qualitative and quantitative nature. Only a small number of articles are based on theory development underpinned by first-hand empirical data or vice versa (T+E Mixed). In such cases, researchers are mostly occupied with testing existing concepts and theory, rather than developing new theory (a typically 'normal science' characteristic). One of the important internal scientific issues is the extent to which the discipline 'allows' the use of different methodologies which reflects the degree of internal scientific constraint. It can be argued that a mono-methodological orientation would imply a strong paradigmatic science, whereas the application of multi-methodologies suggests that the discipline is not paradigm-led. As the table also shows, the field of distributed leadership can be characterized by the use of a variety of research methods, albeit with a special preference for the use of (i) case studies, (ii) (large-n) surveys and (iii) mixed methods that typically combine either qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, or different qualitative methods such as interviews and observations. Furthermore, more specialized and/or technically sophisticated methods such as economics; modeling and/or simulation have so far not been used. This suggests that the research field of shared leadership has some clear interdisciplinary characteristics with considerable tolerance towards the use of different scientific methods of inquiry.

Finally, the research foci or themes of these sub-disciplines are analyzed and subsequently categorized to determine which are the most widely studied within the respective sub-fields. While specialized social science journals do not exclude the possibility for researchers with a different background, such as for example a political scientist publishing in an education-focused journal, revealing the relative distribution of contribution to an area across various journals, may help us to understand the influence of the field under investigation. Figure 2 shows the consolidated research foci (themes) according to their professional origin (PUBL, INTER, HEAL, EDU and ORG/MAN).

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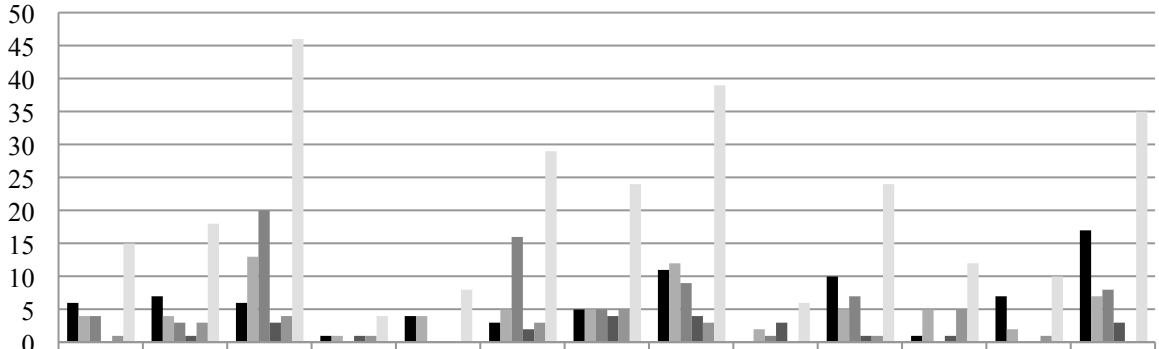
Figure 2: The distribution of contributions according to specific research foci/themes



	CAPA	CHALL	CHAN	COMM	DEF	HRM	MAN	ORG	PARTN	PERF	POLI	PSYCH	TEAM
ORG/MAN	6	7	6	1	4	3	5	11	0	10	1	7	17
EDU	4	4	13	1	4	5	5	12	2	5	5	2	7
HEAL	4	3	20	0	0	16	5	9	1	7	0	0	8
INTER	0	1	3	1	0	2	4	4	3	1	1	0	3
PUBL/COMMU	1	3	4	1	0	3	5	3	0	1	5	1	0
Total	15	18	46	4	8	29	24	39	6	24	12	10	35

Legend: consolidated themes

CAPA	Capabilities: Manager/Leader traits, characteristics, behavior, skills
CHALL	Challenges, Gender, Difficulties, Barriers, Conflict
CHAN	Change, Innovation, Development, Process
COMM	Communication, Discourse
DEF	Definition, Concept
HRM	Human Resource Management, Learning, Job Satisfaction, Empowerment, Employee Involvement
MAN	Management, Management Styles, Managing, Strategy, Decision-making, Management/Leadership roles
PARTN	Networks, Alliances, Partnerships, Collaboration
ORG	Organizational Structure, Organizational Design, Ways of organizing, Culture
PERF	Performance, Effectiveness, Success, Quality assurance, (Continuous) Improvement
POLI	Policy, School reform
PSYCH	Psychology, Psychoanalysis, Cognition
TEAM	Team, self-managed

Most of the research themes of collective and shared leadership identified in the literature seem to originate from the field of ORG/MAN, which suggests that the field of leadership studies is much influenced by researchers investigating organizations from the private sector (for-profit organizations). Furthermore, ORG/MAN researchers are particularly represented in research with a focus on (i) teams (incl. self-management); (ii) organizational and team performance (incl. effectiveness and organizational success); (iii) organizational structure, organizational design and ways of organizing; (iv) psychology, cognitive and decision-making issues; and (v) capabilities of the leader(s), manager/leader traits, characteristics, behaviors and skills. The major themes in ORG/MAN differ considerably from those in the second largest stream of research of collective and shared leadership, namely the hospital and health care management field (HEAL). Within HEAL, the main focus lies on organizational change, organizational development, and the processes surrounding the implementation of shared leadership. Researchers often outline the process of shared leadership in hospitals, or describe and analyze how shared leadership and organizational development are implemented and

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practiced in times of change. The research focus in the field of education management (EDU) is largely focused on new organizational structures, design and new ways of organizing, including organizational learning through a collective way of leading. In addition, there are a considerable number of studies on the effectiveness of a shared leadership model in schools/universities, where the potential success of the model is analyzed.

In summary, most research of collective leadership has concentrated on testing existing theory and concepts. Although this has a certain similarity to normal science and thus "monoparadigm-led" research, the shared leadership field indeed is also open to using different methods, and is not limited by internal paradigmatic/scientific constraints. Although the field is interdisciplinary, it is dominated by scholars from the organization and management, health-care, and education sector. This section has described the more technical aspects of the literature review. The following section discusses the current understanding and concepts of collective leadership.

Collective, Shared and Distributed Leadership Concepts and Definitions

Leadership can take place both at the individual and the collective level. In the former, leadership is referred to as self-leadership/self-management, which is the act of leading oneself to perform intrinsically motivating tasks (Manz & Sims, 1986). Although self-leadership is admittedly interrelated (Lovelace, Manz, & Alves, 2007) with shared leadership, it still remains an individual level concept proposing endogenous influences and this dimension of leadership will not be addressed further here. Shared leadership thus is a concept which includes different agents at the inter-individual level. Whereas self-leadership is associated with an individual's ability to get help from other organizational members in carrying out a common task, shared leadership involves dynamic social interaction during which the participants lead one another in attempts to achieve collective (group or organization wide) goals (Pearce, Manz, & Sims, 2008).

Gronn (2002) identified three forms of concertive agency that are associated with shared leadership: (i) spontaneously arisen collaborative modes of engagement, (ii) the development of intuitive understanding as part of close working relations between colleagues and (iii) various structural relations and institutionalized arrangements which may lead to distributed action (p. 429). In addition, conjoint agency has been introduced to describe how agents synchronize their actions by considering their own plans and those of their colleagues, and by using their sense of organizational membership (p. 431).

As observed above, the terms sharing and distributing are used interchangeably, which may cause some confusion. According to The Cambridge Dictionary (http://dictionary.cambridge.org/), to share an activity means that two or more individuals each do some of the activity. To distribute, on the other hand, means to give something to others, or to spread or supply. This implies that someone (a supra-individual) is responsible for giving, spreading or supplying — in this case, leadership responsibilities and/or tasks. We argue that sharing leadership implies that no single individual in the collective (team or department) gives or distributes all or part of leadership responsibility to anyone. That everyone in the collective has an equal opportunity to undertake leadership, and overall responsibility for leading the collective is shared and supported by everyone. Moreover, different leadership roles can emerge in a group, and these roles may differ in importance over time (Barry, 1991), even though leadership is fully shared. This means that no one is assigned a specific role or leadership responsibility; rather, these roles emerge. Of course, it might be possible to have a single leader

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in a team or department who distributes (some) leadership roles and decision-making power to the other members. While this might be difficult to disqualify as distributed decision-making and localized shared leadership (on purely etymological grounds), under shared leadership (either localized in a team or department or organization-wide), it would (or should) be unthinkable not to share authority (decision-making power) completely among all participants.

Synthesized Framework of Shared Leadership: Antecedents, Agency and Outcomes

Surprisingly, given the relative dominance of contributions from organization and management researchers, we found in our review that few articles address the key factors, processes and mechanisms by which shared leadership is enabled and maintained. In the following, the focus will be narrowed in order to identify some of the key mechanisms of coordination at work during the practice of shared leadership. By doing so, we synthesize or weave together (Torraco, 2005, p. 362) these key mechanisms in order to develop an overall framework. The framework shows endogenous, agency, and exogenous antecedents contributing to the shared leadership phenomenon found in the reviewed literature.

Leadership generally is associated with influencing the direction of a deliberate and/or wanted movement. Leadership, it is argued, also involves a mutual dependency between members during the movement and related task performance and, contrary to hierarchical task assignment and coordination, shared leadership, involves autonomous, yet mutually interdependent task performance. By mutual interdependence is meant reciprocal dependence between two or more members, thereby allowing for overlapping and complementary responsibilities (Gronn, 2002). This complementariness enables interdependent organizational members to make use of the different technical and/or emotional strengths available (Gronn, 2002, p. 433). O'Toole, Galbraith, and Lawler (2002) have captured the essence of mutual interdependency as "the more interdependent the work of co-leaders the more input they should solicit from affected others, and the more they need to coordinate between themselves" (p. 79).

Mechanisms ensuring internal alignment include interdependence and coordination (Gronn, 2002). The coordination of knowledge sharing, for example, is achieved via the development of a common language, understanding and mindset, and the open-ended and flexible division of labour (Zhang & Faerman, 2007). Other mechanisms such as lateral (peer) influence (Pearce, 2004) and co-responsibility (Greenfield, Braithwaite, Pawsey, Johnson, & Robinson, 2009) have also been identified in the literature.

Furthermore, empirically validated characteristics of shared leadership can also be found in the literature. For instance, antecedent conditions leading to the development of shared leadership were recently investigated among a sample of 59 consulting teams by Carson et al. (2007). The internal team environment (manifested as a shared purpose and social support) and external coaching support, however, were found to be key factors likely to influence the development of shared leadership (Carson et al., 2007).

Other empirical studies have found that sharing leadership practices has important implications for discussion patterns and information-sharing in groups (Larson, Foster-Fishman, & Franz, 1998). In particular, these studies showed that information possessed by all group members (shared information) was brought into the joint discussion earlier, and was more likely to be mentioned overall, than privileged information possessed by only one member (unshared information). Moreover, they found that groups with a participative leader to a higher extent discussed information (both shared and privileged) than groups with a directive leader.

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The adoption of shared leadership appears to be especially important in organizations that opt for continuous innovation (Pearce & Manz, 2005). More interestingly, the nature of the relationship tends to change from peer competition towards peer collaboration (James, Mann, & Creasy, 2007).

Differences in shared leadership structures have also been found to affect performance. The empirical study by Mehra et al. (2006) used social network analysis to investigate shared leadership in teams. Findings based on socio-metric data from 28 field-based sales teams showed that differences in shared leadership structures may affect team performance. A distributed-coordinated structure, for example, was found to be associated with higher team performance.

Efficient coordination and inter-individual influence, which have typically been studied in physical settings, suggest that context matters. Shared leadership has also been looked at in relation to virtual teams, which enables the researcher to determine whether a virtual context hinders team members' abilities to coordinate activities and influence others (Pearce, Manz, & Sims Jr., 2009). Longitudinal data were gathered over the course of a semester from virtual teams comprised of students from three North American universities. These data indicate that high-performing self-managed virtual teams demonstrated significantly more leadership behavior over time compared with their low-performing counterparts (Carte, Chidambaram, & Becker, 2006). In particular, these teams displayed significantly more concentrated leadership behavior focused on performance (producer behavior) and shared leadership behavior focused on keeping track of group work (monitoring behavior) than the lower performing teams (ibid.).

Departing from the literature discussed above, allows us to identify key antecedents, mechanisms and outcomes of shared leadership. In figure 3, we have sketched out a synthesized framework of the antecedents and outcomes of shared leadership. The antecedents are divided into endogenous, agency and exogenous factors. The summaries of the studies discussed in the section above show that shared leadership can take place at different organizational levels: (i) the inter-individual level (in the literature often referred to as co- or dual-leadership), (ii) the team or group level, (iii) the departmental level (in the hospital sector referred to as ward or unit level), (iv) the organizational level and (v) the inter-organizational level.

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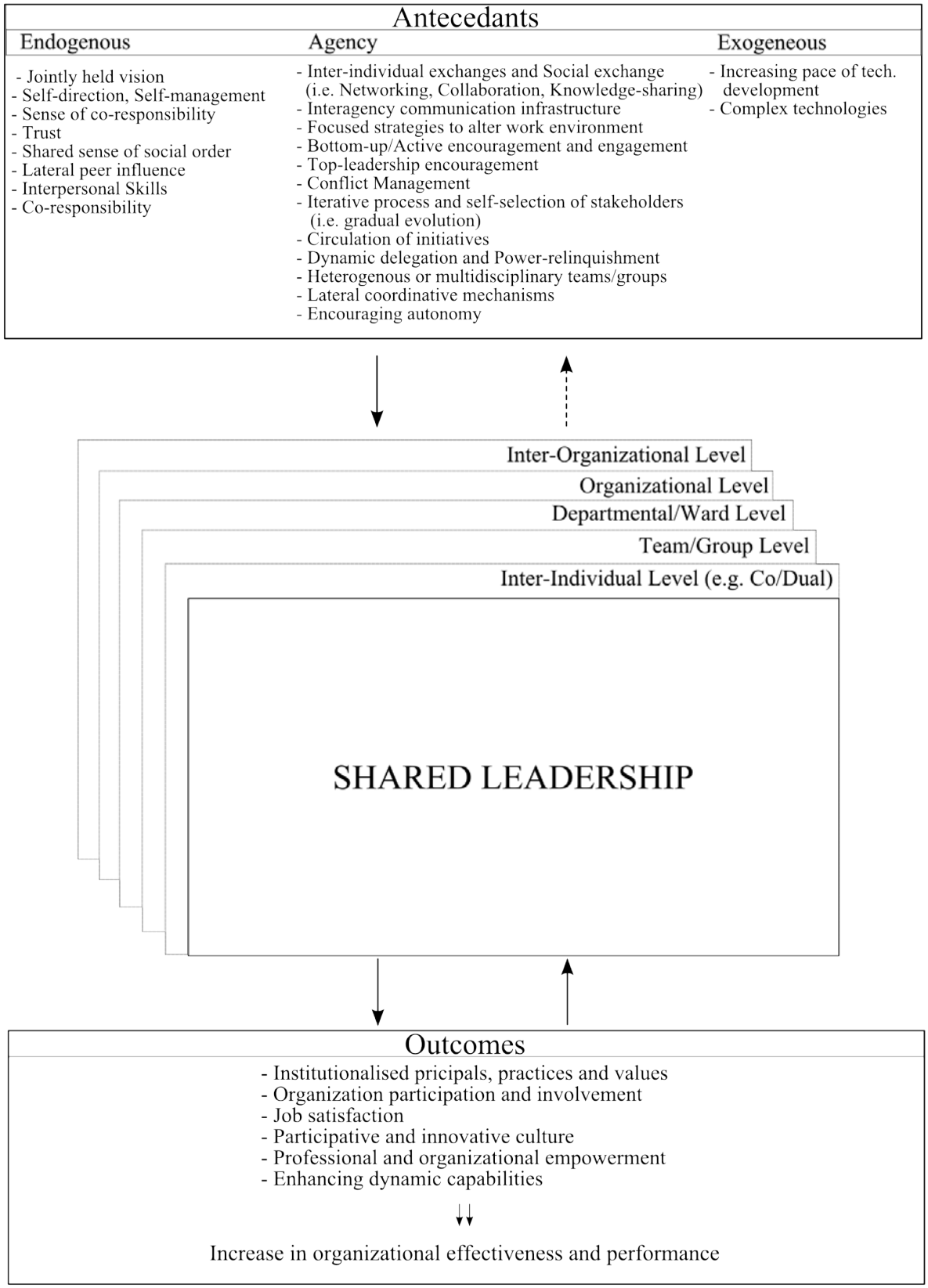
Figure 3: Antecedents, Coordinating Mechanisms and Outcomes of Shared Leadership



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Endogenous Antecedents

Endogenous antecedents appear among the individuals involved in collective and shared leadership. In order to enable shared leadership, group members need to have a joint vision, trust each other and have a sense of co-responsibility (Greenfield et al., 2009; James et al., 2007). Individuals need to circulate the initiative for tasks and responsibilities (Gronn, 2002), which creates a sense of co-responsibility within the team/group. Through partnerships and self-selection, leadership can be emergent and continuously negotiated and distributed across team/group members (Greenfield et al., 2009).

Furthermore, individuals must be able to take a leadership initiative, which in turn means that they must be capable of self-management and have a sense of self-direction (Brown & Hosking, 1986). In addition, a shared sense of social order and interpersonal skills are important endogenous antecedents of shared leadership, since these create a mutual understanding about helping each other and reciprocity of exchange (Brown & Hosking, 1986; Hosking, 1988).

Agency Antecedents

Agency antecedents are those activities that precede and facilitate shared leadership. Such agency antecedents include permission to select partnerships, which can lead to a more natural collaboration between all the parties involved (Greenfield et al., 2009). Processes of inter-individual exchange or collaborative interaction (i.e. networking, collaborating and knowledge-sharing) may support a shared leadership culture. One of the requirements of shared leadership is that both top management and team/group members (i.e. bottom-up) must encourage autonomy (Buchanan, Addicott, Fitzgerald, Ferlie, & Baeza, 2007).

Exogenous Antecedents

Exogenous antecedents are factors outside the control of the firm, i.e. external and given factors that are believed to influence shared leadership, such as the pace of technological development and associated technological complexity. A faster and more complex technology thus implies that management decisions incorporate more of the affected part of the process into the decision-making process. Similarly, the increasing trend towards flat organizations (and parts thereof) and longer and more formal education of the workforce are likely to affect the conditions for shared leadership.

Outcomes

The outcomes of shared leadership can be manifold. Shared leadership practices, for instance, can become institutionalized, so that sharing leadership responsibilities acquire an almost ‘rule-like’ status known from processes of institutionalization (Ulhøi, 2005) and become an embedded part of the organizational culture in question. Another possible outcome is a more participative and innovative culture in the organization (Buchanan et al., 2007), which would make it more nimble in times of change and faster technological development. In addition, diverse and/or multidisciplinary work teams increase creativity due to different perspectives, better ideas and less groupthink (Adler, 1997). Since the inherent nature of heterogeneous or multidisciplinary teams/groups requires different capacities, an organization’s dynamic

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capabilities can be positively influence by shared leadership. Here, potential emerging conflicts need to be formally managed to ensure that they can be resolved and the team/group can move forward (Reid & Karambayya, 2009).

Multiple studies suggest that shared leadership and the responsibilities this practice encompasses improve employees' job satisfaction, increase employee involvement and lead to greater professional and organizational empowerment, which optimally results in an increase in the organizational effectiveness (Burke et al., 2006; Klakovich, 1996; Upenieks, 2000; Varkey, Karlapudi, & Hensrud, 2008; Wells, Ward, Feinberg, & Alexander, 2008).

Implementing a shared leadership model also has its challenges and downsides. For example, in the absence of traditional leaders, who ensure that deadlines are kept and decisions are made. What is the incentive to accomplish tasks if these are not assigned a priori and there is no formal authority to control the output and make sure that targets are achieved? Similarly, we argue, that decision-making processes can be slowed down by a lack of clearly defined roles, responsibilities and areas of influence. Heterogeneity or diversity might also translate into mistrust within the leadership group due to stereotyping (Adler, 1997). Miscommunication due to language and translation problems can cause a lack of cohesion between group members and thus to ineffective decision-making (Adler, 1997). Consensus may thus be difficult to accomplish, which means that these teams become less effective and productive (Adler, 1997). Conflicts may also negatively affect the decision-making process and/or the effectiveness of the team (Hogler, Gross, & Byrne, 2009; Reid & Karambayya, 2009). Other research has pointed to leader corruption and power issues (Pearce et al., 2008) and a negative relationship between the cohesion construct, sense of belonging and cognitive conflict (Ensley & Pearce, 2001).

Implications

The demand for leadership does not necessarily disappear or become less simple because it changes from an individual to a collective phenomenon (Barry, 1991). Rather, we argue, the lack of any formal authority is likely to give room for increased power struggles and conflicts. Consequently, there is a need for a stronger appreciation and deeper understanding of key constituents of shared leadership practice. Longitudinal process studies would enable us to expand our understanding of the important micro-dynamics at play and to learn how to deal with emerging conflicts and/or leader corruption.

Recent research (Sarker & Schneider, 2009) has also found noteworthy cultural differences in the way shared leadership is approached and practiced. In a cross-cultural study involving information systems development in the US and Scandinavia, team abilities, contributions and knowledge transfer were found to be significant predictors of leadership emergence. More interestingly, this study also suggests that US and Scandinavian members do not use the same criteria for identifying remote team members as leaders (ibid.) Are some cultures more/less conducive to shared leadership? Additional theoretical and empirical work is thus needed to investigate the role of culture at both the organizational and national level.

The insights from the review and re-synthesis have some important implications. Upper-echelon managers can actively promote and encourage shared leadership in employee training and disseminate information about what has or has not worked well. Managers can also undertake the role of internal coach to help the collectives (e.g. production team, R&D team or project team) keep a clear and shared sense of direction. Furthermore, they can help reassure employees that organizational norms will continue to encourage and support shared leadership.

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This paper also has some important limitations. First, due to lack of space and simplicity, our framework does not take into account the role of industrial sector, nature of technology, type of ownership, firm size and age, cultural characteristics or the human capital characteristics needed for shared leadership to be successful. However, we recognize that collective forms of leadership are far from immune to significant changes and/or variations across such factors, and that these should be addressed in future research.

It can, of course, be debated whether shared leadership and distributed authority are truly democratic since most organizations would probably recruit top managers who are not elected by those affected by their decisions. On the other hand, as argued by Gronn (2008), de-monopolizing leadership and widening the sources and numbers of organizational members involved in decision-making lays the groundwork for increased democracy.

Conclusions

It can be concluded that the total volume, breadth and scope of publications on shared leadership have increased significantly, especially over the last ten to fifteen years, which suggests that shared leadership is a dynamic and expanding field. Similarly, the growing number of articles on collective and shared leadership in the more prestigious, older and more broadly focused management journals suggests that researchers have not only achieved a high scientific standard, but also that it is a healthy and mature subfield that is becoming widely acknowledged in the broader community of management scholars.

The paper makes three major contributions to the literature. Firstly, it provides a comprehensive in-depth review and analysis and profile of the field of collective and shared leadership. Secondly, it identifies a number of key enabling mechanisms and micro-foundational properties of shared leadership and outcomes, thus helping to close some of the gaps in the literature. Thirdly, this article offers a synthesized framework of the coordinative mechanisms and outcomes of shared leadership which may apply on multiple organizational levels. If shared leadership is to be perceived as a truly collective phenomenon, then there is a need to replace the simplistic leader-follower dichotomy of leadership. And, as argued in this paper, individuals are often perfectly capable of playing both roles.

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