

# Roundtable on Leadership and Administration



**Center for Public Administration and Policy**  
Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University  
Alexandria, Virginia

*July 2007*

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# Roundtable on Leadership & Administration

## A Workshop Conceptualizing Leadership

*A Conversation with*  
**Susan Maybaumwisniewski**  
*Captain, USN (Retired) and*  
*Professor, National Defense University,*

**Maria DiPasquantonio**  
*Manager, Investment Planning and Analysis Division*  
*Federal Aviation Administration*

*and*  
**Jeffrey D. Stern**  
*White House Fellow, Department of the Interior*

**Center for Public Administration & Policy**  
**Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University**

**SUMMARY REPORT**

**July 2007**

## *Purpose of the Roundtable Series*

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The Virginia Tech Center for Public Administration and Policy Roundtable Series on Leadership and Administration:

- Brings together leading scholars, practitioners, students, members of academia, public managers, and participants from the nonprofit and private sectors;
- Stimulates insightful and thoughtful conversation;
- Focuses on the exchange of ideas;
- Advances our knowledge and understanding of leadership in public administration through the sharing of research and experiences.

Participants have the opportunity to explore the links between theory and practice in an intimate setting of conversation.

[www.LeadershipandAdministration.blogspot.com](http://www.LeadershipandAdministration.blogspot.com)

# *A Workshop Conceptualizing Leadership*

*Wednesday, July 18, 2007*

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This Roundtable was devoted to a CPAP community effort to strategize and guide our future forums on developing and understanding leadership and administration. Stepping outside the scholar/practitioner format we have followed for the Roundtable, we asked three CPAP doctoral students to lead this Roundtable discussion with specific audience engagement.



*Roundtable Participants Maria DiPasquantonio, Jeffrey Stern and Susan Maybaumwisniewski*

Round Table guests Susan Maybaumwisniewski, a CPAP Ph.D. student, framed and moderated a discussion with CPAP PhD students Maria DiPasquantonio and Jeff Stern, followed by breakout discussions with CPAP students.

These discussions generated a robust set of agenda items and questions that the CPAP community will continue to engage through the Roundtables and other Leadership & Administration events.

*Susan Maybaumwisniewski*  
*Captain, USN (Retired) and*  
*Professor, National Defense University*

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“I would like to...give you another frame for thinking about role of the leader and the constituent and the roles that they play with one another....Scholarship in public administration theory is pretty much based on a common conception of leadership and that really isn't questioned.” Heifetz and Sinder suggest that “we need to think differently about what the role of the leader really is.”



*Susan Maybaumwisniewski*

“Owen Jacobs...makes the distinction between leader and manager in this way. When things are pretty much going along...sort of in a state of status quo, that person is being a manager....They pretty much know what's going to happen. But when you are in a highly complex, highly volatile and highly uncertain and ambiguous situation and you really don't have a clue as to what the next thing [is that] you should be doing, that's where leadership really emerges. It really is able to take that ambiguous, complex situation and suggest ways of thinking differently or framing up new things that would move you ahead in a situation.”

“In the traditional view of leadership, you think about the leader as the guy who can identify the problem and tell you what the answer is. We frequently look for leaders...strong leaders...that can do that. But in many ways this is really an unfair burden on the leader” because of the complexity of many problems that face public administrators.

Heifetz and Sinder identify three kinds of problems. Type 1 problems are definable. The leader can provide a realistic solution (technical solution available) and it requires little problem solving work on part of the constituents. The full weight of problem solving falls on the professional. Type 2 problems are also definable but there is no clear technical solution available. Constituents must share in defining problem and providing solution. In this instance, the weight of problem solving is shared.

“Type 3 problems are where the solution is not clear cut...now what we're involved in [for] solving the problem and finding the solution...is really a dire emergency. We can only work along to work some of the symptoms around that, but the real problem, the real root of the problem here is that it's something you're going to have to learn how to live with until you don't live with it anymore. But it's not really going to go

away....The role of the leader is to try to work with you to one, come to terms with this really difficult problems that's not going to go away and then to help you figure out ways to manage around it....In fact, it really is the role of the constituent there to figure out, what issues do I want to take on and what do I want to do."

"So the role then - Heifetz and Sinder talk about this - if you think about it, the role of the leader is to help the constituents think about what problems do they want to work on, how do they want to define them, how can they offer solutions to them....The real big issue is how does the leader do that and kind of push these problems back to the constituents without the constituents feeling abandoned? How do you set it up so the constituent is ready to work on these problems, with some understanding that [the constituent] really can work on them and move some things along?"

"Ideally, in a Type 3 situation where you have some of these really ugly issues...illiteracy, poverty, some of these just ongoing wicked problems...one of the ways to kind of think about that, what ways...can you break out pieces that are only a Type 1 or a Type 2 problem that really lends itself to an easier situation or solution."

"We have this one individual who is quote unquote responsible for all of this. How do they think about it? Now they've got to look down through the organization...they've got their ways of doing business [in the organization]...good bad or otherwise, they know how things get done... When they can come in and they can, see some of these routines, they're not helping....What do I need to do, what do I have to deal with, looking down into the organization to do for that organization...? They've got to look out and scan the horizon. Who else do I need to make these relationships with? ... In both of these cases, these guys thought through, who is it that I need to know?"...And then you need to think through, who else do I need to team with? Who else can I establish some teamwork or some kind of coordinated effort with?...The leader has to kind of think through, how do I frame...these problems and these issues so that I can get some engagement from all these organizations and constituencies that really allows me to move my organization forward in a positive direction?"

On adaptive leadership: "I think this is sometimes somewhat of a trap we fall into. If you're the leader, somebody says, 'hey, did you hear about XYZ?' Well, there's some mechanism that you think you've got to make some kind of judgment on this. You know, 'I'm the leader, I have to have a position on this. I have to have a judgment.' Well, do you? I mean, do you? Couldn't you say, 'well, gee, tell me about it?' Or, 'I might have heard about it.' But must you make a judgment on everything?...Isn't that a bit of leadership, your ability to suspend judgment and not feel awkward about it? You know, to not necessarily have to make a judgment on everything. To so immediately paint yourself into a corner."

## *Maria DiPasquantonio*

### *Manager, Investment Planning and Analysis Division Federal Aviation Administration*

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“The organization that we’re in [the FAA]...it’s very complex, it’s highly changing it’s very dynamic, it’s very complicated and you can’t apply the same leadership principles that have been applied for a number of years.”

“Susan talked a little bit about the Type 1, Type 2 and Type 3 problems and I’ve got a really sort of simple example to illustrate how that worked. Russ Chew came in [as



*Maria DiPasquantonio*

Chief Operating Officer of the FAA’s performance-based Air Traffic Organization] and one of the things he really wanted to do was disassociate people from their old organizations, because we really had a myriad of acronyms and different organizations. He wanted to set up these different operational units, so he basically changed the name of all the operational units and he eliminated mail codes. So that was kind of his solution for, I’m going to break up this organization and I’m going to rename things and disassociate [people].

“Well, two things happened. Eliminating mail codes meant that nobody got mail and it really just sat around, you know, and people didn’t know where to deliver it. So things kind of sat around, and the other thing that he failed to identify was that people really associated an identity with their organization. So if I was in AJF-3, that my organization and I felt a sense of pride associated with that. So once all these things were thrown out the window, people didn’t know how to associate with this larger organization....He really thought this was a kind of Type 1, technical problem, an easy fix... I’m just going to get rid of this thing but what he failed to realize [is] that the impact on the organization from a human perspective....So again, it’s a simple stupid problem but if you...treat everything as a technical problem, it’s something I can fix with my own authority, then you’re going to potentially negate other stakeholders in the organization.”

Heifetz and Linksy talk about Type 1, Type 2 and Type 3 problems as adaptive leadership problems. “Basically they’re saying that, if you’re an expert in your field and you’re the leader, then you can probably solve any technical problem that comes up because you’ve probably seen it before or if not, you’ve probably got the expertise to solve it. But in today’s complex environment, where we get new problems everyday and we don’t necessarily have within our own organizations or within ourselves the

capability to solve those, we have to reach out across the organization to other stakeholders and pull them into the discussion. And in that instance the leader really becomes more of a facilitator than just sort of solving the problem in the traditional way.”

“These are things we face every day. For example, September 11<sup>th</sup>. We had never done anything like that before. There was a technical solution for landing all of the planes within a half hour, but how do you get to that decision and who makes that decision? So again, there was part of a technical piece as a solution to that problem and there was also an adaptive piece of that problem too because you’ve got the human interaction across the system.”

In terms of adaptive leadership, “sometimes you have to kind of step away or step out of the situation. [Heifetz and Linsky] call it getting on the balcony. So they use the analogy, you’re on the dance floor, you’re mixing it up with your folks and your colleagues but sometimes you have to step above, step on the balcony, sort of assess the situation and sort of determine the next move is you’re going to make and then kind of go back on the floor and mix it up a little more and see how far and see how much progress you can make....Sometimes you’re in a situation where you think, ‘I’ve got to act’ but that’s not always the case. Sometimes you need to reflect and think about different ways to approach the situation.”

*Jeffrey D. Stern*  
*White House Fellow*  
*Department of the Interior*

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“One of the leadership theories that’s being discussed up at Harvard...is called meta-leadership....What this meta-leadership construct talks about [are] these characteristics of leaders who’ve been able to come in and engage their organizations in doing works that’s outside of their organizational silos and really influencing outside of their organizations in order to really get at some of this adaptive and difficult work.”

“The key thing about meta-leadership...is it’s really important for the leader to try and frame these complex problems so people can both understand and deal with them. Both of them were able to come in and frame out the problem for the organization. In Witt’s case, he’s framing out and communicating that the employees are valued and that they’re going to build a world-class organization. For Paulison, it’s that the organization has failed to perform but it’s going to be reinvented and lean forward and meet its mission. So by facing that and framing out what they want to do, they develop a leadership constituency within their organization. That’s what they term ‘leading within the silo.’ First you have to develop credibility within your area of discipline before you lead outside of it.”



*Jeffrey D. Stern*

Witt and Paulison “both had kind of different situations in terms of their ability to lead up, to manage up within the organization. James Lee Witt had a direct relationship with President Bill Clinton. The organization in 1995 was made a cabinet-level agency and it was very easy for James Lee Witt to have that direct, executive influence. Dave Paulison coming in in the middle had to forge these relationships with the President and the Secretary of Homeland Security. He also faced the added burden that he was one of two Democrats in the administration.”

Witt and Paulison “both had to build relationships and manage up and they had to build relationships across to different kinds of organizations. In the case of James Lee Witt...once he kind of built the capacity by reaching out vertically down through the federal system to gain the confidence of the state and local governments and the adaptive work he got them engaged with was really this concept...of mitigation. The idea that we can prevent major catastrophies if we invest a little up front.”

“For Dave Paulison, the real challenge has been within DHS. It’s a work in progress but they’re integrating now FEMA within the Department of Homeland Security. So that FEMA members are attending the weekly meetings. The people that embedded now in the organization realize that not only is it across Homeland Security but across the whole government reach out and build bridges between folks. In that sense, they’re building horizontal strength and then they’re also trying to re-reinvest in something that Witt had built, to go vertically, that is the FEMA regions that Witt built, groups of state areas where they’re throwing people in to rebuild relationships with state and local governments. Paulison’s really adaptive work is to get the whole system – both FEMA, the federal government and the state and locals - is to what he calls ‘leaning forward’ ...so that everything is synchronized.” The private and nonprofit sectors are also included horizontally, “so that everybody kind of has a role. The ultimate adaptive challenge that’s out there, with the solution unclear ...is how do you get this whole country energized down to the individual citizen and manage expectations so that people are prepared?”

## *Future Questions for Conceptualizing Leadership*

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1. Should we have predictive capability when we apply a theory of leadership? Could we have a roadmap under the leadership theory? What would this roadmap look like, and how could it guide students of leadership and public administration?
2. Is there one definition of leadership? How does the definition change with the organization? To what extent can you define "leader" with one set of characteristics?
3. What qualities of leadership should you look for in a candidate if you are a politician appointing people for either the long-term or the short-term? How should you make this selection if you have 1) an undefined future and 2) a constrained timeframe for making such appointments?
4. To what extent is it important that a leader knows when to decide and when not to decide? How does a leader know when to suspend judgment in decision-making? When should a leader suspend judgment?
5. How does the anticipated timeframe for impact influence decision-making for leaders?
6. How do you create a Type III circumstance in which your impact as a leader is over the long-term? How do you create an organization in which Type III leadership is the norm?
7. How do you differentiate leading and managing?
8. Are leaders born, or made?
9. Can leadership be taught and can the good be fostered? If so, what skills should be taught?
10. Can evil be tempered?
11. How can we foster, or give more ownership to the public to address problems in a public setting?
12. How crucial is the context within which people lead? Consider the Constitutional context, the legal context, and variation across the federal structure, as well as international variation. Does the organizational-cultural context matter?
13. Is there a role for the spiritual or principled leadership style in the public domain?



*Attendees at the July 2007 Roundtable*

14. Does the mission make the manager or the leader? – Does mission matter most?
15. What is the effect of organizational culture on successful leadership? What are healthy public organizational cultures and how might leaders foster such cultures?
16. In a public sector setting, what is the role of personal or organizational agendas? What is the role of personality?
17. Does good leadership always imply change? Does the type of leadership model matter for organizational change? Do different models of leadership approach change differently? And is one more effective than others, and why? Lea
18. What is the model for administrative leadership? We have models for business leadership, and political leadership?
19. Is there a model for administrative leadership within the political parties that is reflected in appointments across agencies?
20. How do we integrate scholarship and practice? Can we engage to move forward on model of leadership and administration?
21. Does the model matter for the type of organizational change?
22. How do political parties influence leadership?
23. Does the type of fellowships/organization matter?
24. How does the U.S. Constitution provide inspiration for leadership?
25. Does leadership imply positive values?
26. Is leadership needed only with problem organizations?
27. How transparent does leader need to be in public organizations?
28. What is the goal of leadership?

## *At the Table*

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### *Susan Maybaumwisniewski, Captain, USN (Retired) and Professor, National Defense University*

As a Professor of Acquisition, Susan Maybaumwisniewski conducts graduate level seminar instruction in a variety of subjects such as the role of acquisition policies and procedures in national defense; strategic leadership and decision-making; the national and international weapons industry; and, a regional security study seminar on China. She spent more than thirty years in a career with the US Navy. Working largely in anti submarine warfare and shore station management, she primarily worked in towed array systems for passive acoustic detection below 150 Hz. She has extensive facility management experience culminating in a tour as Commanding Officer of the Washington Navy Yard. She is currently pursuing a Doctor of Philosophy in Public Administration at Virginia Polytechnic University.

### *Maria DiPasquantonio, Manager, Investment Planning and Analysis Division, Federal Aviation Administration*

Maria DiPasquantonio graduated from Boston University with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Aerospace Engineering. She received a Master of Management Degree from the Pennsylvania State University with a concentration in Business / Public Administration. She is currently a doctoral student in Public Administration and Policy at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. In terms of professional development, Maria is a Graduate of the Department of Defense Executive Leadership Development Program and the Advanced Program Management Course at the Defense Systems Management College. She is Level III Certified in both Systems Engineering and Program Management.

Maria is currently employed with the Federal Aviation Administration where she is the manager of the Investment Planning and Analysis Division, reporting to the Air Traffic Organization's Senior Vice President for Finance. In this capacity she provides managerial and technical leadership in the conduct of high level, short term strategic or financial economic analyses and develops recommendations for FAA senior leaders on investment and cost savings opportunities. Prior to holding this position she was a program manager in the Satellite Navigation Product Team.

Prior to joining the FAA, Maria was employed by the Naval Air Systems Command. Throughout her thirteen year career with the Department of the Navy, she held various project engineering and technical management positions. She began her career at the Naval Air Development Center in Warminster, PA, as an Aerospace Engineer and project engineer.

*Jeffrey D. Stern, White House Fellow, Department of the Interior*

Jeff Stern has served as a firefighter, paramedic, and battalion fire chief in Maryland, Colorado, and Virginia, and has led special operations teams for search & rescue, hazardous materials, and SWAT. Previously, he was Deputy Coordinator of Emergency Services in Arlington, Virginia. He has written and lectured about first responder safety, training, incident management, terrorism, and disaster response, and consulted to local, state, federal, and international governments on emergency response issues. He graduated from the College of William & Mary with a B.A. in government, from the American University School of Public Affairs with a Master of Public Administration, and is a Ph.D. student at Virginia Tech's Center for Public Administration and Policy. He helped lead emergency response teams to Hurricanes Charley and Katrina. Stern recently served as a White House Fellow and Special Assistant to the Secretary of the Interior, the Honorable Dirk Kempthorne, in the Office of Law Enforcement, Security, and Emergency Management and he currently is the Executive Director for the Homeland Security Advisory Council, US Department of Homeland Security.

## *Additional Resources*

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- For more details on Type 1, 2 and 3 problems, see *Political Leadership: Managing the Public's Problem Solving* by Ronald A. Heifetz and Riley M. Sinder, published in Robert Reich's edited volume The Power of Public Ideas (1990) by Harvard University Press.
- Bass, Bernard M. (1996). *The Ethics of Transformational Leadership*. KLSF: Transformational Leadership, Working Papers (Academy of Leadership Press, 1997).
- Linsky, Martin. Ronald A. Heifetz. *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading*. (2002). Cambridge: Harvard Business School Press.