

## Wisdom and Leadership: Common Ground

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The concepts of wisdom and of leadership are explored for common ground within the general field of psychology. Although models of wisdom differ in a number of ways, there is some agreement across definitions that wisdom requires a richness of life experiences and knowledge, is evidenced by reflective judgement as a cognitive process, and requires the integration of these cognitive processes with other dimensions, predominantly affective, social, or cultural. We discuss the concept of wisdom and the organizational psychology area of leadership. Both the processes and the products of wisdom imply judgement and decision-making about oneself and about others. The leadership literature, similarly, relies heavily on issues of judgement, decision-making, and interacting with other individuals and groups. Commonalities and differences between the constructs of wisdom and leadership are identified and the research implications discussed.

本稿は扱う範囲を一般心理学に限り、智慧・指導力という二概念が共有する基盤を探ろうとするものである。智慧を判別する基準は少なくない。ただ智慧が豊富な人生経験と知識とを必要とすること、熟慮の後に判断を下すという認識過程が智慧を証すること、智慧にはこの認識の過程とその他主として情緒的社会的文化的要素とが総合されていなければならないこと、これらの認識がどの定義にも共通して見られる。本稿は智慧の概念を論じ、組織心理学から見た指導力を扱おうとする。智慧の働きとそれが生み出したものは共に自己及び他者に関する判断・決断を相伴うものである。同様に指導力に関する文献も判断・決断・他者との関わりという問題に深い関係がある。本稿は智慧と指導力を形作るものとの間に見られる共通点及び相違点を明らかにし、この研究が持つ意味を論じるものである。

Wisdom, a research domain within the area of cognitive aging, is viewed as a cognitive process which develops as one advances through life stages, although neither the developmental aspects nor the links with aging have been empirically established. Csikszentmihalyi and Rathunde (1990) describe wisdom as a cognitive process which has evolved and through which one considers "the world in a disinterested way, seeking the ultimate consequences of events as well as ultimate causes while preserving the integration of knowledge" (p. 48). They argue that its survival implication is in countering a process which considers only selfish, short-term goals that could turn out to have disastrous consequences for the individual and/or for others.

The wisdom literature focuses on potential improvements and increases in abilities. Although models of wisdom differ in a number of ways, there is some agreement across definitions that wisdom requires a richness of life experiences and knowledge, is evidenced by reflective judgement as a cognitive process and requires the integration of these cognitive processes with other dimensions, predominantly affective, social, or cultural. The products of wisdom include good decisions (Arlin, 1990), 'peak performance, exceptional insight, and advice giving' (Baltes & Smith, 1990), and an understanding and insight about oneself and about others (Orwell & Perlmutter, 1990). (Sternberg (1990) provides an excellent review of the wisdom construct from a variety of perspectives.)

Although there seems to be an implicit belief that wisdom is related to age, this link has not yet been empirically established (Meacham, 1990). Many wisdom researchers do, however, take a developmental perspective and consider wisdom to be a facility which develops throughout life within what Baltes (1993) termed an age-by-personality-by-experience paradigm.

Both the processes and the products of wisdom imply judgement and decision-making about oneself and about others. The leadership literature, similarly, relies heavily on issues of judgement, decision-making, and interacting with other individuals and groups. The traits, skills, and behaviors of successful leaders appear similar in many ways to those of the wise person. It is therefore considered likely that there are some areas of common ground between wisdom and leadership. A literature review of both areas of study was, therefore, undertaken with the aim of clarifying areas of commonality and providing a preliminary look at a potentially rich research field.

Here we discuss the constructs of wisdom and leadership, the commonalities and differences between wisdom and leadership variables, and some implications of the convergence of these constructs.

## Theories of Wisdom

Wisdom has been studied by a number of researchers who differ mainly in their theoretical orientation toward the topic. Sternberg (1990) groups the numerous approaches to wisdom into three main categories: those informed by philosophical conceptions of wisdom, those informed through what he termed folk conceptions, and those informed by psychodevelopmental conceptions of the construct. The approaches include wisdom as reflective judgement (Kitchener & Brenner, 1990), as postformal thought (Sinnott, 1989;1996), as problem finding (Arlin, 1990), as integrated thought from a developmental perspective (Labouvie-Vief, 1990), personality perspectives (Orwell & Perlmutter, 1990) and in terms of affect-cognition relations (Kramer, 1990).

Sinnott (1989;1996), who takes a developmental approach to the study of wisdom, focuses on the issue of postformal thought. Postformal thought goes beyond that considered to be part of the developmental "formal operations stage" (Piaget, 1952 cited in Berg & Klaczynski, 1996). It is defined as a complex logical organization of thinking or way of solving difficult problems through the contemplation of additional factors which may be social, cultural, or interpersonal and in consideration of "elements of emotion, life-stage tasks and personal meaning" (Sinnott, 1996, p. 358). Knowledge and truth are not absolute but must be ascertained from among possible truths. Sinnott states that the research to date provides reliable evidence that a different, and presumably, higher order, sort of problem solving can occur. She considers that this postformal higher order reasoning process constitutes adaptive intelligence, a feature of wisdom.

Postformal thought, then, is a unique way of thinking about complex issues, implying integration of multiple inputs and resources. The issue of dealing effectively with complexity is one that recurs throughout the literature. It is a necessary condition for postformal thought or wisdom-related outcomes. Simple, basic problems do not require wise solutions.

Baltes, Smith, and Staudinger (1992) study wisdom within the framework of life-span developmental theory. They distinguish between the mechanics, or basic information processing, and the pragmatics, or procedural knowledge, of intelligence. The pragmatic intelligence component is considered to be content rich and to differ depending on life experiences. This latter form of 'intelligence' is especially important in the consideration of the construct of wisdom.

The Berlin Group (Baltes, et al., 1992; Baltes & Staudinger, 1993) identifies wisdom as "good judgement and advice in important but uncertain matters of life" and see it as "an expert knowledge system in the fundamental pragmatics of life permitting exceptional insight, judgement, and advice involving complex and uncertain matters of the human condition" (Baltes & Staudinger, p. 76). They suggest that age is a necessary, though not sufficient condition for wisdom. Despite an expected relationship between age and wisdom, they have failed to empirically find this connection. On the contrary, some researchers even consider that wisdom may decline with age (Marcel, 1951; Meacham, 1990).

The Berlin Group's model of wisdom outlines five criteria which characterize the concept. The criteria are: 1) factual knowledge in the fundamental pragmatics of life; 2) strategic knowledge in the fundamental pragmatics of life; 3) knowledge which considers the uncertainties of life; 4) knowledge which considers contexts of life and societal change; and 5) knowledge which considers the relativism of values and life goals (Baltes & Smith, 1990).

The ability to deal with complexity and to integrate different factors and processes appears to be integral to Sinnott's (1989;1996) conception of postformal thought, as well as a major theme in the Berlin model of wisdom. Baltes and Staudinger (1993) further, propose that personality dispositions play a part in the development of wisdom. Such dispositions include an openness to new experiences as well as other factors related to experience. These other factors include prior involvement in a mentorship relationship in an area relevant to life matters and extensive training and experience relative to the human experience. Their study supports this hypothesis, in part, as clinical psychologists, members of a profession related to

the human condition, outperformed matched control subjects on 'wisdom-related tasks'. They did not find a significant effect of age, which they had specified as a necessary condition for wisdom, although it is possible that restriction of range or other factors affected their results (see also Baltes, Staudinger, Maercker & Smith, 1995).

Further to the essentially cognitive processes discussed by Baltes et al. (1992), Baltes and Staudinger (1993), and Sinnott (1996), Birren and Fisher (1990) conceptualize wisdom as a variable which differs on two additional dimensions. The growth of knowledge is an important criterion in their model, as is the reasoned application of such knowledge. Their model also includes, however, an affective component and a volitional component. The affective or emotional component refers to the notion that wise decisions are not affected by strong emotions or passions but are made relatively dispassionately. The volitional component indicates the proneness to act in a given situation. It subsumes drive and motivation to act but also implies that the unwise rush to act without due consideration.

Their conceptualization is developmental in that they consider wisdom to be something which develops throughout life, as a balance of these three main elements: cognition, volition, and affect. This process of wisdom "results in wise products, such as planning, decisions, and advice" (Birren & Fisher, 1990, p. 321). Important contextual factors for their model are situational, such as the nature of the situation one is confronted with as well as how much time one has to resolve the situation. Time is further important in terms of whether the solution is short-term or will have long-term consequences. Personality dispositions, evident in the Baltes, et al. (1992) model, are touched on only briefly in the assessment of whether or not an individual or decision is considered wise. They indicated that value orientations can affect this assessment. Interestingly, this latter comment implies that wisdom is not a fact or a constant attribute of an individual, but differs as a function of the perceiver.

Clayton and Birren (1980) investigated individuals' perceptions of what it means to be wise. They found that perceptions of wisdom and its relationship to various related constructs, such as age and intelligence, do differ at different points in the life-span. They further confirmed that wisdom, as it is perceived, seems to represent an integration of general cognitive, affective, and reflective qualities. This notion of integration as well as the cognitive and reflective components, in particular, are common constructs in the wisdom literature.

It seems that, although individual models of wisdom differ in a number of dimensions, there is a modicum of agreement that wisdom requires a richness of life experiences and knowledge, is evidenced by reflective judgement as a cognitive process and requires the integration of these cognitive processes with other dimensions, predominantly affective, social, or cultural. Orwell and Perlmutter (1990) define it as a multidimensional balance or integration of personality development and cognition and affective insight; Sternberg (1990) as a metacognitive style plus sagacity; and Kramer (1990) as a process which recognizes individuality, context, and understanding of change in the integration of affect and cognition.

The literature similarly provides common themes in terms of what are considered the outcomes or products of wisdom (Birren & Fisher, 1990). Among the products of wisdom are good decisions (Arlin, 1990), peak performance, exceptional insight, expert advice giving (Baltes & Smith, 1990), and an understanding and insight about oneself and about others (Orwell & Perlmutter, 1990).

## **Theories of Leadership**

Definitions of leadership are many (see Stogdill, 1974). For example, Stogdill (1950) defines leadership as "the process (act) of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts toward goal setting and goal achievement" (p. 10). Fiedler (1967 as cited in Stogdill, 1974) expands the definition of leadership by including consideration for the well being and feelings of group members. There is generally some agreement across definitions that leadership involves interacting with other people in pursuit of a common goal. Inherent in the leader, as opposed to the follower, is influencing or persuading others to set aside individual desires or goals in order to pursue a goal important to the group (e.g., Hogan,

Curphy & Hogan, 1994). Hersey and Blanchard (1988) expand this in considering leadership "the process of influencing the activities of an individual or a group in efforts toward goal achievement *in a given situation*" (italics added), (p. 86). As they explain, leadership is a process which encompasses the leader and the follower, as well as the situation.

These three basic components of leadership are reflected in the main approaches to the study of this construct. Although some researchers investigate particular constructs such as need for power or achievement, generally leadership theories can be classified as either trait, behavioral, or situational.

Trait theories of leadership (e.g., Stogdill, 1974; Yukl, 1981) attempt to specify the personality, abilities, and other attributes of leaders which are primary influences on effectiveness. In addition to intelligence, certain personality traits have been found to predict managerial effectiveness. Barrick and Mount (1991) found that, of the so-called Big Five personality traits (McCrae & Costa, 1989), extraversion and conscientiousness were most strongly related to managerial effectiveness while Tett, Jackson, and Rothstein (1991) found a relationship to managerial effectiveness with all five of these traits (emotional stability, agreeableness, and openness to experience, in addition to extraversion and conscientiousness). Lord, De Vader, and Alliger (1986), in a meta-analytic review of personality traits and leadership, found that persons that are dominant, highly intelligent, and have masculine personalities are more likely to be seen as leaders. (Dipboye [1987] found no consistent relationship between leader effectiveness and gender.) The trait approach is typified by the notion that leaders are born and not made.

Behavioral approaches are based on the notion that leader effectiveness differs depending on the particular behaviors exhibited in performing the role of leader. A major implication of this approach is that one could be trained to be a leader. To be a leader, one merely has to adopt the appropriate leader behaviors, which can be learned. Which behaviors are crucial differs depending on investigators theoretical approaches. Task-relevant behavior, which is aimed at accomplishing the tasks or goals assigned to the group, and person-relevant behavior, which includes activities which foster positive group interactions are dimensions typically considered. Theories in line with the behavioral approach include those outlined by the Ohio State studies of leadership (e.g., Stogdill & Coons, 1957), which consider two fundamental dimensions of leadership, initiating structure and consideration, and the Blake and Mouton (1964) grid approach, which describes leaders based on their preferred behaviors and position in a nine-point grid along the dimensions of employee-oriented and task-oriented behaviors.

Situational theories of leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988; Stogdill, 1974) provide models outlining the most appropriate leader behaviors for a given situation. This approach focuses on the behaviors of leaders and their effects on followers. Crucial leader skills include diagnosing the situation in order to determine the most appropriate leadership behaviors and adapting leadership style to that situation (Hersey & Blanchard).

Stogdill (1974) notes that the situational approach "denie[s] the influences of individual differences, attributing all variance between persons to fortuitous demands of the environment" (p. 82). He found that leaders and non-leaders do indeed exhibit different personality traits, although situational factors also play a key role. Stogdill (1974) and Yukl (1981) both state that leadership is influenced by both individual differences and situational variables and both insist that this view is not a return to the view that leaders are born. Thus, personality factors cannot alone account for successful leadership.

More recently, researchers have been investigating leadership as a process and focusing to a larger extent on the follower or issues relating to interaction with followers. Examples include 'values leadership' which focuses on fostering a climate which nourishes values of excellence, justice, and learning (Fairholm, 1991), 'enabling leadership' which emphasizes the contribution of all group members in a manner whereby group leadership passes from one person to another as the situation dictates (Jaap, 1989), and transformational leadership (Bass, 1985) which seeks to heighten the awareness of followers, colleagues, and others about the issues of consequence and the importance of group goals. Pawar and Eastman (1997) suggest that this may be accomplished through a vision which changes cultural values and bonds individual and collective interests.

Leadership, then, represents an interaction of leader, follower, and situational variables. Traits, in addition to being useful in the selection of leaders or managers, may also

be useful in assessing a predisposition to engage in behaviors or to actively employ appropriate strategies or skills. Behavioral theories further address skills and strategies and the situational context is also important for effective leadership.

## Wisdom and Leadership

### Outcomes - wisdom and leadership

Thus far, we have seen that there are common themes in the literature regarding the outcomes or products of wisdom (Birren & Fisher, 1990). These include good decisions (Arlin, 1990), 'peak performance, exceptional insight, and advice giving (Baltes & Smith, 1990), and an understanding and insight about oneself and about others (Orwell & Perlmutter, 1990). Given this discussion about the task, skills, and behaviors of successful leaders, it would appear that there are some areas of common ground between wisdom and leadership. These commonalities will be discussed with respect to personality or individual difference variables and skills followed by behaviors and processes.

### Personality variables - wisdom and leadership

In contrast to much of the early research on wisdom, Baltes and his colleagues went beyond the predominantly theoretical work by developing an empirical model which would "permit the objective quantification of wisdom-related *performance*" (*italics added*), (1993, p. 586). They outlined antecedents and mediating processes for the acquisition and maintenance of wisdom-related knowledge and skills. This framework is shown in its entirety in Figure 1. Within this framework is a section which encompasses General Person Factors. These factors are cognitive mechanics, mental health, social competence, and openness to experience (Baltes, et al., 1992).

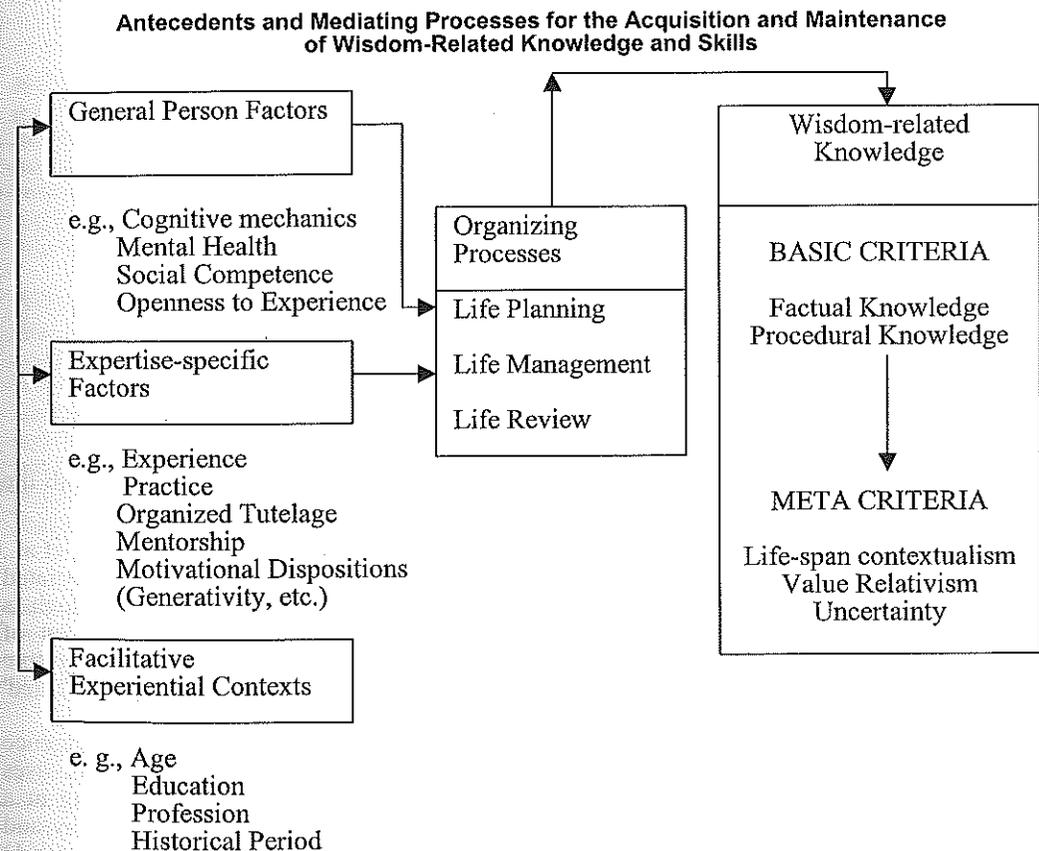


Figure 1'

Holliday and Chandler (1986, cited in Chandler & Holliday, 1990) conducted a factor analysis of participant ratings of descriptors of persons considered wise, intelligent, perceptive, shrewd, and spiritual. Their analysis of factors associated with 'wise' yielded five principal factors: Exceptional Understanding, Judgement and Communication Skills, General Competence, Interpersonal Skills, and Social Unobtrusiveness (the latter referring to the ability to be discrete or non-judgmental).

As mentioned previously, numerous researchers have addressed the issue of personality or individual difference variables and leadership. Barrick and Mount (1991) discuss the importance of conscientiousness and extraversion. Yukl (1981) cites Bray, Campbell, and Grant's (1974) findings of traits which correlate with managerial advancement in AT&T. The list encompasses: oral communication skill, human relations skill, need for advancement, resistance to stress, tolerance of uncertainty, organizing and planning, energy, creativity, range of interests, inner work standards, behavioral flexibility, need for security, ability to delay gratification, decision making, primacy of work, and goal flexibility. Yukl's list of traits and skills (Table 1) found to be characteristic of successful leaders is comprehensive and will therefore be used as a basis for comparison with the traits and skills evident in the wisdom literature, although other researchers will be cited where appropriate.

**Traits and skills found most frequently to be characteristics of successful leaders.**

Traits	Skills
Adaptable to situations	Clever (intelligent)
Alert to social environment	Conceptually skilled
Ambitious and achievement oriented	Creative
Assertive	Diplomatic and tactful
Cooperative	Fluent in speaking
Decisive	Knowledgeable about group task
Dependable	Organized (administrative ability)
Dominant (desire to influence others)	Persuasive
Energetic	Socially skilled
Persistent	
Self-confident	
Tolerant of stress	
Willing to assume responsibility	

**Table 1<sup>2</sup>**

The following personality or skill variables are discussed as components of both the wisdom and the leadership literatures:

1. As outlined earlier, numerous leadership studies (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Tett, et al., 1991; Yukl, 1981) stipulate that intelligence is a trait which is strongly associated with leadership. The wisdom literature indicates that cognitive mechanics, which is similar to some aspects of what is considered "intelligence" is a component of wisdom. The wisdom literature further identifies the importance of cognitive pragmatics (Baltes & Smith, 1990) which is similar to the 'conceptually skilled' ability characteristic of successful leaders (Yukl, 1981).
2. Cognitive pragmatics and postformal thought (Sinnott, 1996) or adaptive intelligence both imply, as does the wisdom literature as a whole, that the cognitive processes associated with wisdom include the integration of multiple inputs in arriving at a decision or formulating a judgement. "Judgement" is also identified by Holliday and Chandler (1986) as one of the major components of wisdom. While Yukl's (1981)

- traits and skills list does not show a variable which directly addresses this integration notion, his variables "organized (administrative ability)" and "creative" could relate peripherally to the ability to integrate multiple inputs and sources effectively.
3. Baltes and Staudinger (1993) identified 'social competence' as an antecedent general person factor of wisdom. Holliday and Chandler (1986) found 'interpersonal skills' and 'social unobtrusiveness' to be two of five principal factors associated with wisdom. Yukl (1981) included 'socially skilled' and 'alert to social environment' in his list of successful leadership traits and skills. The leadership skill 'diplomatic and tactful' may also be considered related to these latter skills as well as to social unobtrusiveness (the ability to be discrete or non-judgmental).
  4. Communication skills, identified by Holliday and Chandler (1986) as a factor of wisdom also has a commensurate variable in Yukl's (1981) list which indicates 'fluent in speaking'. It is likely that this skill contributes to the aforementioned social competence. 'Persuasive', another of the skills listed by Yukl, could also relate to this fluency.
  5. Yukl (1981) indicates that 'adaptable to situations' is a trait of successful leaders. Wisdom is considered to be adaptive intelligence (Sinnott, 1996). Further, wisdom requires an openness to new experiences (Baltes & Staudinger, 1993), one of the personality variables identified by Tett, et al. (1991) which was related to managerial effectiveness.
  6. Wisdom comprises a tolerance for ambiguity. This is explicitly stated by a number of wisdom researchers (Baltes & Smith, 1990; Kitchener & Brenner, 1990; Sternberg, 1990) and could perhaps also be considered an initial part of the process in the integration of multiple inputs. Bray, et al. (1974) list tolerance for ambiguity as a trait associated with managerial advancement. Yukl's (1981) list includes 'tolerance for stress' which is potentially greater in the individual who has a good tolerance for ambiguity.

There are a number of variables which are identified in Yukl's (1981) list of traits or skills of successful leaders which are not explicitly found in the wisdom literature. It is possible, however, that they may bear some peripheral relationship to wisdom. Yukl's list includes 'cooperative', and 'self-confident', which are not explicit in the wisdom literature but may be found to be related to that construct. Wisdom as a research domain is as yet in early conceptual stages and has not yet been definitively clarified in terms of its component attributes, skills, or developmental processes. It is possible, as this research field matures, that these and other variables which may be related to leadership will become more evident.

Leadership attributes which do not appear to be part of the wisdom construct include 'decisive', 'ambitious and achievement-oriented', 'assertive', 'dependable', 'dominant', 'energetic', 'persistent', 'willingness to assume responsibility', and 'organized'. These constructs seem to refer to a desire to perform, achieve and take on responsibility, a need to achieve, and a dominant position. This provides some divergent evidence to indicate that leadership and wisdom, although apparently related, are not identical. Further, some of these notions, such as those related to dominance and ambition, seem to be less prevalent in more recent approaches to leadership such as enabling leadership (Jaap, 1989), values leadership (Fairholm, 1991), charismatic leadership (Conger & Kanugo, 1988) and transformational leadership (Bass, 1985).

The ability to see other viewpoints or perspectives, to put oneself in someone else's shoes, is integral to the concept of wisdom. It is not as evident in the leadership literature. It seems likely, however, that such an ability would greatly facilitate communications, social competence, and the integration of multiple inputs. The more frequent interchange of follower and leader and the attendant behaviors to foster it do seem to be more evident in recent formulations of leadership.

We have noted that communication skills likely aid in social competence. It is considered that many of the traits and skills of successful leadership, identified by Yukl (1981) and others, are not unique and distinct constructs. There is considerable overlap between many constructs (e.g., intelligent, knowledgeable) in both the wisdom and leadership literatures. While this provides a richness of information, it is difficult to clarify

and isolate many constructs making conceptual simplicity troublesome and measurement difficult.

### **Behaviors and processes - wisdom and leadership**

As outlined previously, behavioral theories address the acquisition of the necessary leadership behaviors or skills which can be learned. These skills are then brought to bear on a given situation or context which, in turn, results in a leadership process.

Mintzberg (1973;1984) outlines ten working roles of the manager. He divides these roles into three groups - three interpersonal roles, three informational roles, and four decisional roles. These interrelated roles are: figurehead, leader, liaison, monitor, disseminator, spokesman, entrepreneur, disturbance handler, resource allocator, and negotiator. The liaison, monitor, and disseminator roles all focus on communication with people, either external or internal, from whom information is received. This consideration of numerous factors which may affect operations or decisions seems to relate to the wisdom-related process of integration.

The entrepreneur initiates improvement projects and manages change within the organization. The disturbance handler takes action when there is a major problem, generally a novel one for which no one individual has designated responsibility. In this case, the manager acts as a problem solver. The resource allocator oversees the allotment of resources and thereby strategy making. These last four roles in particular emphasize the substantial decision-making component of management and leadership. Decision-making is, similarly, a key process in the construct of wisdom. Recall that the Berlin Group (Baltes, et al., 1992; Bales & Staudinger, 1993) identify wisdom as "good judgement and advice in important but uncertain matters of life" and see it as "an expert knowledge system in the fundamental pragmatics of life permitting exceptional insight, judgement, and advice" (p. 76). It is apparent that judgements, advice, and even insight relate to decision-making. Sinnott (1996) also explains wisdom in terms of decision-making. In discussing postformal thought, a key component of adaptive intelligence, she notes that complexity of the situation and/or of the decision to be made constitutes a necessary condition for postformal thought or wisdom-related outcomes. Sinnott (1996), further cautions that postformal thought does not occur all of the time; merely that it can occur and is useful. Similarly, good leadership or management may not be as evident in simple, routine activities.

Yukl, Wall, and Lepsinger (1990) report the development of an instrument to measure behavioral aspects of the leadership or management process. The Management Practices Survey's numerous studies have resulted in eleven key factors or behavioral categories which characterize the management process. These practices are: informing, consulting and delegating, planning and organizing, problem solving, clarifying roles and objectives, monitoring operations and environment, motivating, recognizing and rewarding, supporting and mentoring, managing conflict and team building, and networking (pp. 225-226).

Again, communication, decision-making, and integration are prevalent themes. Further, Yukl, et al.'s (1990) practices include a stronger element of the interpersonal aspects of leadership in those variables which deal with motivating, recognizing and rewarding, managing conflict and team building, and supporting and mentoring. These interactional components are also evident in the wisdom-related notion of the integration of affect and cognition (Birren & Fisher, 1990) and even of affiliation and social concerns (Orwell & Perlmutter, 1990) in decision-making. Note also that 'mentorship' is one of the expertise-specific factors in Baltes and Staudinger's (1993) model which outlines the processes and antecedents to wisdom. It is interesting that an earlier version of this model, published by Baltes and Smith (1990) included leadership experience as a factor facilitative of wisdom although it no longer appears in their model.

Birren and Fisher (1990) see wisdom as the growth of knowledge, and its reasoned application, through the integration of affect, cognition, and volition. Important contextual factors for their model are situational, such as the nature of the situation one is confronted with as well as how much time one has to resolve the situation. Situational theories of leadership have already been discussed. Further, although traits, behaviors, and processes have primacy in most of the more recent leadership literature, they are almost invariably discussed as having a degree of dependence on the situation.

### Aging, wisdom, and leadership

Developmental approaches to wisdom (e.g., Baltes, et al. 1992; Baltes, 1993; Birren & Fisher, 1990; Labouvie-Vief, 1990; Sinnott, 1996) consider it to be something which develops throughout life. Factors which Baltes and Staudinger (1993) propose in the Berlin model as antecedent to wisdom include prior involvement in a mentorship relationship in an area relevant to life matters as well as extensive training and experience relative to the human experience. This requirement for a certain amount of life and/or more specific experiences necessitates a certain amount of time. This, in turn, implies that a person is unlikely to have developed sufficiently to be considered wise unless some amount of time has passed. It is reasonable, then, to state that some degree of maturity is likely to be a necessary condition for wisdom. The amount of time or degree of age that would be required has not yet been determined. Although the Berlin Group considers age a necessary but insufficient condition for wisdom, their 1992 study (Baltes, et al.) found no difference in wisdom-related tasks between participants aged 30 to 70.

There is relatively little attention paid to age as an individual difference variable in the leadership literature. Stogdill (1974) reports that the evidence regarding the relationship of age and leadership is "quite contradictory" and notes that "chronological age cannot be regarded as a factor which is correlated with leadership in any uniform direction or degree" (p. 40). His work does, however, include studies of group leadership in school age children. Some research has been done which relates the characteristics and activities of "great leaders" such as presidents of the U.S.A. (House, Spangler, & Woycke, 1991), who have attained a certain degree of maturity. Stogdill, in further discussing the complicated relationship of leadership and age, explains that "it takes time to rise to the top" (p. 76). Most leadership research is undertaken with adult populations, often within an organizational context, so it can be considered that, as for wisdom, a certain degree of maturity is a necessary condition for successful leadership.

### Summary

Based on this review, a list indicating those trait or skill variables which are consistent with both wisdom and leadership constructs is provided in Table 2. Attributes or skills associated with leadership that do not appear to be related to the development or practice of wisdom are listed separately.

Traits and skills of leadership and wisdom

Traits and Skills of Wisdom and Leadership		Traits and Skills of Leadership Only
Wisdom Terminology	Leadership Terminology	
Adaptive intelligence	Adaptable to situations	Ambitious
Cognitive mechanics	Clever (intelligent)	Achievement-oriented
	Knowledgeable about group task	Assertive
Cognitive pragmatics	Conceptually skilled	Cooperative*
Communication skills	Fluent in speaking	Decisive
	Persuasive	Dependable*
Integrate multiple inputs	Organized (administrative ability)	Dominant (desire to influence others)
	Creative	Energetic (high activity level)
Judgement	Judgement	Persistent
Social competence	Alert to social environment	Self-confident*
Interpersonal skills	Socially skilled	Willing to assume responsibility
Openness to new experiences	Openness to new experiences	
Social unobtrusiveness	Diplomatic and tactful	
Tolerance for ambiguity	Tolerance for ambiguity	
	Tolerant of stress	

Table 2

\*May be wisdom-related but is not explicitly discussed in the wisdom literature.

Note that wisdom is considered to be subsumed under leadership. Just as not all persons are wise or become wise, so not all are successful leaders. The focus here is therefore on successful leadership. This is not to suggest that one cannot be appointed a leader or act in such a role if they have not acquired wisdom. It does suggest that in order to be a good or successful leader, wisdom may be a necessary condition. As the relationship of age to either wisdom or leadership is not yet clear, it has not been included in the list. Further research is required before this component can be appropriately included.

## Conclusions and Implications

Given that empirical investigations of the wisdom construct have employed decision-making or advice giving tasks (e.g., Baltes et al., 1992; Baltes et al., 1995), it is not surprising to find a great deal of overlap with leadership - a construct that also involves decisions and advice. There are however some critical features of leadership that are not necessary to a definition of wisdom. Leadership researchers focus more on issues such as influence and motivating others. Further, those aspects of leadership which encompass need for power and achievement are not intrinsic to the concept of wisdom; although, in more recent conceptualizations of leadership (e.g., Bass, 1985; Pawar & Eastman, 1997) there is an increased emphasis on cooperation. Dominance and power issues seem to have lesser importance recently. However, it is expected that, as a minimum, a desire to lead or a desire to contribute to the establishment and achievement of group goals is a necessary condition for leadership. This desire is not explicit in the wisdom literature. It may be that for good leadership, wisdom as well as the desire to lead is required. It is also possible that such a desire to contribute to group goals may be part of wisdom. However, as discussed, wisdom research to date has generally focused on problem solving and to our knowledge has focused on individual rather than group processes. Research in the group context is required to further clarify the nature of wisdom.

There is considerable agreement that work groups or teams will be seen increasingly in organizations in the future and some consider that many will be self-managing (Offerman & Gowing, 1993). This will increasingly require leadership skills. The more recent leadership approaches seem to emphasize a more cooperative style which actively includes team members in group processes and goal achievement. Perhaps teams of the future will be led by more integrative and less dominant leaders who have developed wisdom. And perhaps the older workers, potentially at risk for early retirement, may be a promising source of these leaders.

Wisdom is typified by the integration of multiple inputs and sources, by the weighing of short- and long-term consequences, and by considering issues of fact and of affect. It seems apparent that such a thoughtful approach to problem-solving and decision-making could be of considerable benefit to good leadership. What is less apparent is the nature of this contribution. Is wisdom, by nature, a trait with individuals varying in the degree to which they exhibit it? Does it vary in interaction with the environment and the "richness of life experiences" of individuals? Is it merely a problem-solving skill which could be used to train more effective leaders? The nature of the relationship between the two awaits clarification which can not be determined without a great deal of empirical research. Is wisdom a necessary condition for successful leadership? Is there some sort of reciprocal relationship? In addition to being a fruitful investigative area in and of itself, the wisdom construct has substantial implications for the selection and training of good leaders.

Consideration of these two constructs in tandem is not sufficiently developed to allow integration of behavioral, process, and outcome components. This initial look has served to integrate the wisdom literature, still in the early stages of theory development, with the more mature research area of leadership, and to outline some intriguing possibilities. As the research domain of wisdom matures it is hoped that these possibilities will be addressed. A great deal of research is required not only to evaluate the traits and skills presented in Table 2, but to ascertain developmental processes and the attendant situational and other variables which impact on these two important constructs.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> From Baltes, B. P. and Staudinger, U. M. (1993). The search for a psychology of wisdom. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 2, (3), p. 79. Cambridge University Press. Permission pending.

<sup>2</sup> From Yukl, Gary A., *Leadership in Organizations*, © 1981, p. 70. Reprinted by permission of Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

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