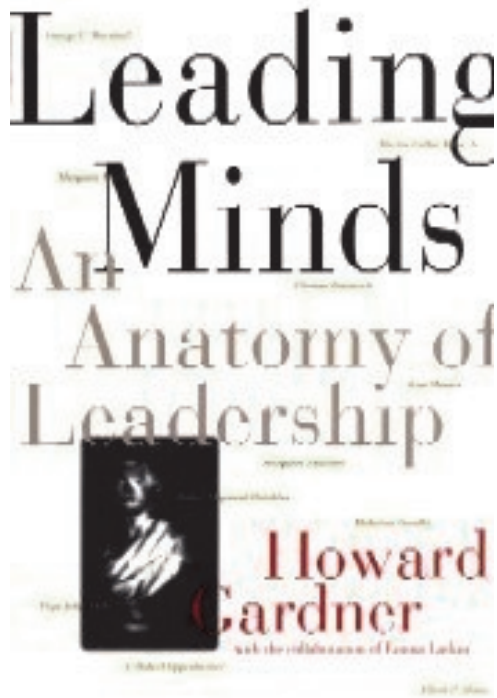


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# Howard Gardner Leading Minds

## AN ANATOMY OF LEADERSHIP



## Summary

One only has to glance at the front page of a newspaper to realize that we are in the midst of a global leadership crisis; all over the world, *unemployment, terrorism, nuclear proliferation, climate change* and *war* plaster the headlines and attune us to the failures of those who have promised to lead us.

In *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership*, Howard Gardner has examined leadership through a cognitive lens and offered fresh insight into the lack of skilled, constructive leadership that has plagued our world since the latter half of the twentieth century.

Through the portraits of eleven great leaders, Gardner has identified a number of recurring elements critical to effective leadership, from

early childhood markers to key features imminent in all forms of leadership.

In these trying times, we can take inspiration from individuals, who ignored conventional wisdom and risked defeat, rejection and obscurity to pursue the ideas they believed in, but more than that, we can glean wisdom from their individual and collective experiences.

With a greater awareness of the constants, variables and the tensions that complicate a leader's role, Gardner believes we can combat the ignorance that has been responsible for the orphaning status of leadership and develop an enhanced cadre of responsible and effective leaders.

## The Churchill - Einstein Continuum

*"A leader is an individual who significantly affects the thoughts, feelings and behavior of a significant number of individuals"*

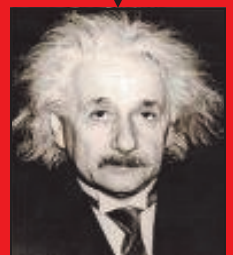
When we think of leaders, we usually envision political or military giants, like Winston Churchill. It seems odd to apply the word *leader* to Albert Einstein, unless it is accompanied by a descriptor like "physicist".

But, if we consider Gardner's definition of a leader as "*an individual who significantly affects the thoughts, feelings and behavior of a significant number of individuals*" (p. ix), then it becomes obvious that Einstein is as deserving of the term as Churchill.

According to Gardner, Churchill and Einstein mark two ends of a continuum denoting the capacity of one person

to influence other people. Whereas Churchill exerted his influence in a *direct* way through the stories that he communicated to England and the world, Einstein exerted his influence in an *indirect* way through the ideas he developed and the ways in which he captured those ideas in theories and treatises.

If we are to increase our understanding of the crucial phenomena of leadership, Gardner believes we must scan a range of cases along the continuum, from individuals whose leadership was primarily indirect those whose leadership was unambiguously direct.



# Leaders Along the Continuum

*Margaret Mead (1901 – 1978):* An American cultural anthropologist, Mead became famous for her pioneering studies of adolescence among islanders in the South Seas and for her insight into the changing mores of the twentieth century. A writer and speaker for over fifty years, Mead influenced the world's views on childhood, family, sex and society.

*J. Robert Oppenheimer (1904 – 1967):* A theoretical physicist, Oppenheimer is best known as the scientific director of the Manhattan Project. From 1943 to 1945, Oppenheimer led a large and diverse group of scientists in a secret effort to develop the world's first nuclear weapons. After the war, Oppenheimer's outspoken political opinions earned him the ire of Joseph McCarthy and he was eventually stripped of his security clearance.

*Robert Maynard Hutchins (1899 – 1977):* Named president of the University of Chicago when he was just thirty years old, Hutchins began his tenure by criticizing the institution's lack of standards and its emphasis on fun and vocationalism. Calling for a reorientation of the values of American higher education, Hutchins endorsed a controversial, tradition-based view of education rooted in the study of classical texts and the discussion of philosophical issues.

*Alfred P. Sloan, Jr. (1875 – 1966):* As the head of General Motors, Sloan set up an organizational structure that exploited the strengths of both centralized and decentralized institutional arrangements and he encouraged the belief that America's strength emanated from its capitalist economy.

*George C. Marshall (1880 – 1959):* Marshall rose through the ranks of the US military to become a highly effective chief of staff during the Second World War. Appointed US Secretary of State after WWII, Marshall used his position to call for and direct a recovery program for Western Europe.

*Pope John XXIII (1881 – 1963):* Appointed at the age of seventy three as interim pontiff, Pope John XXIII surprised colleagues by announcing plans for a Vatican Council to re-examine the role of the Catholic Church in modern society. He called for a return to the simple messages of early Christianity, reduced tensions between political superpowers and built bridges that spanned faiths, nations and ideologies.

*Eleanor Roosevelt (1884 – 1962):* A niece of one American president and the wife of another, Roosevelt was a leading advocate of liberal and humanitarian causes in the United States and around the world. Although widely criticized for her leftist ideals, she was often touted as "the most admirable woman in the world".

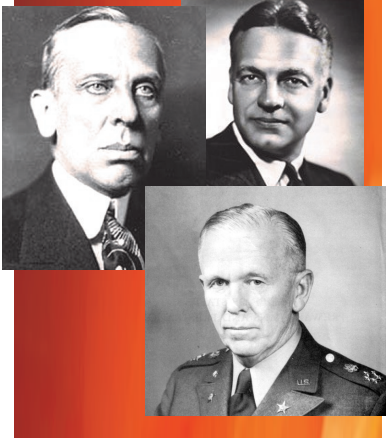
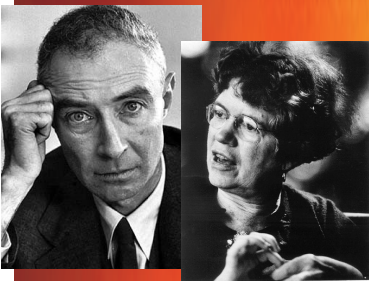
*Martin Luther King, Jr. (1929 – 1968):* Trained as a minister, King became one of the most successful advocates of racial desegregation. His march on Washington raised consciousness for the African American civil rights movement and established his position as one of the greatest orators in US history. In the light of his decision to focus on more domestic and international issues, his position as black leader became more tenuous. He was assassinated in 1968.

*Mahatma Gandhi (1869 – 1948):* Gandhi was a political and religious leader who guided his native India to independence in the first half of the twentieth century. He developed and practiced an ascetic philosophy of living and encouraged the use of non-violent resistance as a form of conflict resolution.

*Jean Monnet (1888 – 1979):* A French economist and diplomat, Monnet played a crucial, but behind-the-scenes-role in the reconstruction of France after both World War One and Two. Because of his efforts for over half a century to bring people and nations together, he is often credited as being the chief architect of a united Europe.

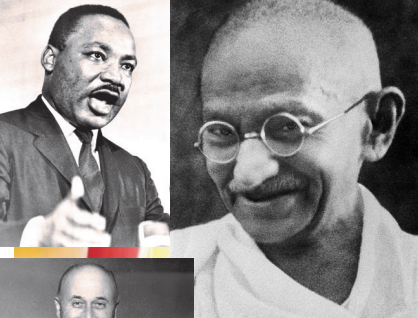
*Margaret Thatcher (1925 - ):* Thatcher rose from modest origins to become Britain's Conservative Prime Minister from 1979 to 1990. She inspired fundamental reconfiguration of the social, economic and political forces of her country, provided decisive leadership during the 1982 Falkland War and helped forge new relations with Eastern Europe.

**Although they came from different countries and social backgrounds and were trained in a range of vocations, these eleven individuals all became leaders in the sense that they "significantly influenced the behaviours, thoughts and feelings of a significant number of individuals"**



*My own definition of leadership is this: The capacity and the will to rally men and women in a common purpose, and the character which inspires confidence*

*Field Marshall Bernard Montgomery*







# Recurring Leadership Features

Through his study of the eleven aforementioned individuals, Gardner discovered a number of features that recur prominently in effective leadership, features that are certain to increase our understanding of the nature of leadership and improve our selection of potential leaders.



## The Antecedents of Leadership: Early Childhood Markers

In the past, few systematic efforts have been undertaken to pinpoint the early markers of leadership. Given the diversity of cultural, economic, social and political experiences among world leaders, this is hardly surprising.

At first glance, it is hard to find a common thread linking the eleven continuum leaders. According to Gardner, some of the leaders “were clearly popular among, and sought after by, their peers from an early age; but many others had childhoods that were marked by loneliness, isolation, or frankly antisocial (if not criminal) behavior” (p. 32). But, upon closer inspection, Gardner was able to identify a number of recurrent

patterns in the childhoods of these future leaders.

For instance, a number of the continuum leaders had lost a parent at an early age. Recalling an similar study which found that over 60 percent of major British political leaders had lost a parent, most often a father, during childhood, (p. 32), Gardner surmised that the loss of a parent fosters independence and confidence. Deprived of full parental support, would-be leaders are stimulated to form their own precepts and practices in the social and moral domains, and, as a result, they develop a greater sense of self-reliance.

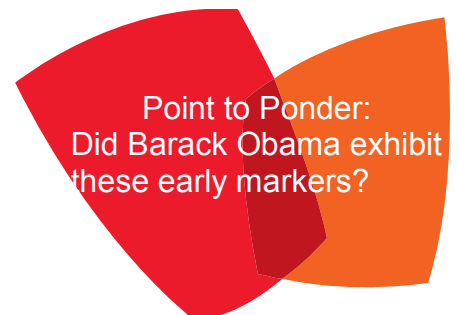
More so than formal education, travel appears to have influenced the development of leadership ca-

pabilities among continuum leaders. According to Gardner, the most effective non-authoritarian leaders are those who have ventured outside their homelands to expand their experiences and viewpoints. Indeed, Gandhi, Eleanor Roosevelt and Winston Churchill all undertook voyages to foreign lands in their youth.

From an early age, continuum leaders appeared to identified more with individuals in positions of authority than with their own peers. This is, according to Gardner, because they believe themselves capable of feats beyond those achieved by normal individuals. Eventually, it is this exaggerated sense of specialness, that forces would-be leaders to seek the leadership role for themselves.

### Early Leadership Markers

- Loss of a parent has made would be leaders self reliant
- Family tensions have made them resilient and able to mediate conflict
- Early failures have given them a tenacity others find hard to understand
- Travel has opened them up to new perspectives
- Would be leaders are attuned to the needs of others
- They demonstrate a strong sense of morality
- They identify with those in a position of authority
- They are willing to confront authority and use power to attain goals
- They are persuasive storytellers
- They rapidly increase the size of their social circle
- They are confident, competitive and controlling



Point to Ponder:  
Did Barack Obama exhibit these early markers?



# Constants of Leadership

Gardner has identified six key features integral to effective leadership, as summarized in the table below:

Constant	Description
<b>Story</b>	A leader has to have a central story or message.
<b>Audience</b>	The audience has to be ready to hear the story.
<b>Organization</b>	An enduring leadership ultimately demands some kind of institutional or organizational basis.
<b>Embodiment</b>	The creator must in some sense embody his/her story, so as not to appear hypocritical.
<b>Direct/ Indirect Leadership</b>	The transition is easier from indirect leadership (domain-specific) to direct leadership (more heterogeneous)
<b>Issue of Expertise</b>	Within a domain, an individual is unlikely to achieve any credibility unless his/ her work is seen to be of high quality. Within every domain, there is technical knowledge unavailable to most leaders or audience members; the leader must be able to call on that knowledge when needed.

## The Story

All leaders fashion stories, *simplified narratives that help people think about who they are, where they came from and where they are headed* (p. 43).

Every story has two facets: the propositional account told directly by the leader and the vision of life that is embodied in the actions and the life of the leader.

Throughout life, individuals hear different, competing stories and have to evaluate the merits of each consciously and unconsciously. There is always the chance that the more sophisticated story will prevail, particularly when the teller is skilled and the audience is sophisticated but, more often than not, the less sophisticated story is the one that becomes entrenched.



Types of Stories:



Categories of Leader Based on their Stories:	
<b>Ordinary Leader</b>	An ordinary leader does not stretch the consciousness of his audience; he merely piggybacks on an already entrenched story (Gerald Ford)
<b>Innovative Leader</b>	An innovative leader takes a story that has been latent and brings new attention to it; he tries to recapture the glory and innocence of earlier times (Charles de Gaulle)
<b>Visionary Leader</b>	A visionary leader creates a new story (Jesus Christ)

Leader	Main Story
<b>Margaret Mead</b>	We anthropologists have the privileges of chronicling the cultures of the world, demonstrating that none is superior. We bring back insights and convey them in plain language to our compatriots
<b>J. Robert Oppenheimer</b>	We scientists have the skills to play a major role in the prosecution of the all-important war effort. We must bury all differences and work in secrecy
<b>Robert Maynard Hutchins</b>	We educators must reconstruct the university so that we can produce a liberally educated population. We must avoid frills, progressivism, mindless pluralism and the worship of science
<b>Alfred P. Sloan</b>	We are in business doing God's work. GM knows the best way to conduct business and has produced the best corporate family
<b>George C. Marshall</b>	We in the military must be disinterested professionals. We must avoid politicization, be ready for any contingency, and inspire others by our exemplary actions
<b>Pope John XXIII</b>	Catholics and Christians must return to the simple teachings of Christ. We must avoid bureaucratic and political infighting.
<b>Eleanor Roosevelt</b>	We women can and should be full participants in the political life of the nation, and we should stand up for what we believe is right
<b>Martin Luther King</b>	We blacks must stand up for our rights and do so non-violently

# The Audience



For a story to be successful, it has to fit the mentality of the audience. According to Gardner, individuals go through four stages of evolution. During these stages, their theories about the world change as do their identification with groups. While domain-specific leaders can address their stories to sophisticated audiences, those who hope to address the masses must see their audience as *unschooled* and keep their stories simple enough for children.

<p><b>The Five Year Old Mind</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Limited ability to empathize with others</li> <li>Sees the world in terms of good vs. evil</li> <li>Belong to one group only: family, church or state.</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Ten Year Old Mind</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fair to a fault</li> <li>Consider the intention underlying an action, as well as the action itself</li> <li>Spurn those whom they consider bad</li> <li>Acknowledge the existence of different groups and try to identify with positive groups</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Adolescent Mind</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See people as having both good and bad traits</li> <li>Friendships are dynamic and changing</li> <li>Believe groups have long and complex histories; no one group has a copyright on goodness or evil</li> </ul>
<p><b>The Mature Mind</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Synthesize warring viewpoints, but take a stand on what they personally believe in</li> <li>Concerned with what they have accomplished and how they are regarded in the community</li> <li>Will choose a specific group and justify its position, but realize that if they were members of another group they might think differently</li> </ul>

## The Developed Leader

*“No leader is ever fully realized; at most, one can observe individuals who are in the course of attaining greater skills and heightened effectiveness”*

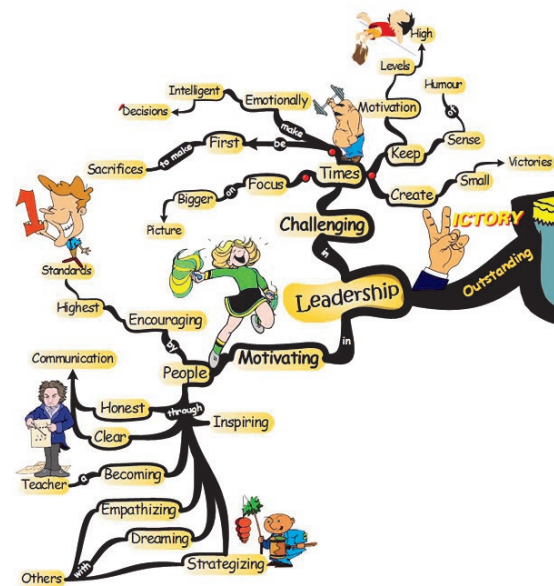
According to Gardner, “No leader is ever fully realized; at most, one can observe individuals who are in the course of attaining greater skills and heightened effectiveness” (p. 36). That being said, there are four factors that do appear crucial to the development of an effective leader:

1. *A Tie to the Community (or Audience):* An effective leader cannot exist without followers. The relationship between the two is ongoing and dynamic, so the leader must be flexible enough to account for changes. If the relationship is to endure, a leader must be willing to work with followers to create an institution that embodies their common values,
2. *A Certain Rhythm of Life:* As important as maintaining regular and constant contact with the community, an effective leader must take the time to

know his own mind and understand his changing thoughts, values and strategies. Periods of isolation and reflection are critical to effective leadership.

3. *An Evident Relationship between Stories and Embodiment:* An effective leader recognizes that he exercises his influence, not simply through the stories and messages that he communicates, but also through the traits that he embodies. He is careful that his stories do not clash with his embodied behaviour, because he does not want to risk a hostile response from his audience.

4. *The Centrality of Choice:* For leadership to be truly effective, a leader must allow his followers to exert some sort of choice. When a measure of stability exists, a leader has not need or temptation to invoke instruments of terror.



*A great leader must be an educator, bridging the gap between the vision and the familiar. But he must also be willing to walk alone to enable his society to follow the path he has selected.*

*Henry Kissinger*





# The Future: Guidelines for Effective Leadership

Gardner has outlined three lessons relevant for the proper training of leaders and for the successful prosecution of their enterprises.

1. *Appreciate Enduring Features of Leadership:* Any leader who wishes to be effective must acknowledge and attempt to deal realistically with the constants of leadership. While leaders differ from one another in the extent of their ambition, the size of their audiences and the uniqueness of their messages, they must all confront the enduring features of leadership. These considerations should constitute part of the training of leaders and should be continue to be monitored by the leader during his tenure.

2. *Anticipate and Deal with New Trends:* Leaders must be aware of and find ways of coping with the future trends.

3. *Encourage Recognition of the Problems, Paradoxes and Possibilities of Leadership:* In the future, leadership must be thought of as a subject that can be mastered and as a role that can be achieved should one be willing to invest heavily in such enterprises. All citizens - leaders and audience members alike - must be educated in the issues and paradoxes. The more widely these are understood, the less likely it is that irresponsible leaders will be able to rise and prevail in the long term.

## Issues and Paradoxes of Leadership

**It can be difficult to balance the need for technical expertise and the necessity for broad-base communication skills.**

**Stories need to speak to many individuals and help them achieve a more satisfying individual and group identity.**

**Comprehensive knowledge may be distributed across the members of a group, but it is much easier to deal with a single leader**

**All leaders are limited in what they can accomplish; all leaders will experience failure as well as triumph and nearly all leaders will experience obstacles they cannot overcome.**

**An audience needs to aid leaders and share their burdens.**

**Some leaders are direct and some indirect; some will be a combination of both.**

**It can be difficult to balance a rational approach and a spiritual approach.**

**An audience can be manipulated by a leader, influenced by a leader or cooperate with a leader**

## Implications for Education



Although *Leading Minds* is not directly focused upon leadership in education, leaders in the educational community can learn much from and be inspired by Gardner's analysis.

While Gardner has stated: "I certainly do not see the work as a guidebook that, once assimilated, will turn an ordinary citizen into a leader or an ordinary leader into an exceptional one," (p. xi), he has provided educational leaders with an important lesson: In order to be effective, they must know their stories, get them straight and communicate them effectively, particularly to those who are partial to rival stories; above all, they must embody in their lives the stories they have told.

Gardner has also emphasized the order of leadership training, not simply for potential leaders but for all: "An enhanced cadre of future leadership can materialize only if we engender widespread appreciation of the principal issues that surround effective leadership" (p. 303). It is imperative, then, that educational leaders familiarize students with the constants and variables of leadership, as well as the tensions that complicate a leader's role.

## Points to Ponder:

### Administrators:

1. How can we promote a greater understanding of leadership development among administrators?
2. As an administrator, what story are you sharing with your audience?
3. Are you embodying your story? In other words, would your audience say you "walk the talk"?

### Teachers:

1. Is leadership inherent or is something that can be developed?
2. Is youth leadership training worth of greater attention at the school level?
3. If so, how might we incorporate Gardner's Guidelines for Effective Leadership into the curriculum?



# Critique

Very few human beings become leaders but, without effective leadership, societies cannot function. So, how do we foster the leadership necessary to ensure the survival of our societies? Howard Gardner believes that we are more likely to “understand garden-variety forms of leadership if we have a deeper understanding of unambiguous example of powerful leadership” (p. x). In *Leading Minds: An Anatomy of Leadership*, Gardner analyzes and compares the leadership experiences of eleven extraordinary individuals, from Margaret Mead to Mahatma Gandhi, in the hopes that ordinary, everyday leaders might develop a better understanding of their tasks and find new ways to achieve success.

It should be noted, however, that *Leading Minds* is not a how-to manual for leadership. One should not read Gardner with the expectation of receiving explicit leadership advice. As Gardner stated: “I do not see the work as a guidebook that, once assimilated, will turn an ordinary citizen into a leader or an ordinary leader into an exceptional one” (p. xi). In fact, the resounding message behind *Leading Minds* appears to be that good leadership lies in qualities beyond our influence or control. Gardner may have dismissed the notion of leadership as something that occurs naturally, but not one of his chosen leaders ever undertook a formal study of leadership; rather, they all demonstrated an early predisposition for leadership.

These criticisms aside, *Leading Minds* remains an interesting and enlightening read, and a must for any history or biography buff. One cannot help but be impressed with how Gardner has managed to flesh out his theoretical notions through the experiences of such diverse men and women. As for the themes that Gardner has introduced, they will undoubtedly remain in the mind of the reader and surface each time that he or she opens the newspaper and is confronted by a story about leadership.



Howard Gardner is an American psychologist based out of Harvard University. The author of over twenty books and several hundred articles, Gardner is best known for his theory of *Multiple Intelligences*, a critique of the notion that there exists a single human intelligence that can be measured by a standard psychometric instrument.

## Howard Gardner: A Intellectual Leader

### *A Brief Biography*

Gardner was born in Scranton, Pennsylvania in 1943 to Jewish immigrants who had fled their native Germany during the rise of Fascism. Although they arrived in the safety of the United States on the infamous Kristallnacht of November 9, 1938, Gardner's parents could not forget the fates of those they had left behind. The family was dealt yet another tragic blow, when, just months before Gardner's birth, eldest son, Eric, was killed in a tragic accident. Growing up, Gardner felt the burden of his parents' losses, as he was denied the opportunity to partake in 'dangerous' physical activity and was instead ushered towards more creative and intellectual pursuits.

When Gardner first arrived at Harvard in 1961, he planned on majoring in History. It was only under

the influence of his tutor, psychoanalyst Erik Erikson (to whom *Leading Minds* is dedicated) that Gardner changed his major to Social Relations with a interest in Clinical Psychology. Inspired by the work of Jean Piaget, Gardner again changed his focus; he completed his doctoral studies in Cognitive Psychology in 1971.

At present, Gardner is the John H. and Elizabeth A. Hobbs Professor of Cognition and Education at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He is also a founding member of Good Work, a group that studies works that are excellent in quality, socially responsible and personally meaningful, and examines outstanding leaders and exemplary institutions and organizations.

### What the Critics Say...

“Once again, Howard Gardner illuminates for us a crucial aspect of human behaviour. If, as he claims, great leaders achieve power through the stories they tell, Gardner's own fascinating narratives of leadership show why he is one of the intellectual leaders of our time”

Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi

Effective leaders put words to the formless longings and deeply felt needs of others. They create communities out of words. In *Leading Minds*, Gardner shows that he is just such a leader. he is just such a leader, able to articulate and clarify what many of us have been thinking on the subject for a long time”

Warren Bennis, *Harvard Business Review*

*“A leader is an individual who significantly affects the thoughts, feelings and behavior of a significant number of individuals”*