

# ADVANCES IN GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

**Edited by** Joyce S. Osland,  
Betina Szkudlarek, Mark E. Mendenhall  
and B. Sebastian Reiche

ADVANCES IN GLOBAL  
LEADERSHIP

**VOLUME 13**

# ADVANCES IN GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

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Volume Editors: Joyce S. Osland, Betina Szkudlarek, Mark E. Mendenhall and B. Sebastian Reiche

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ADVANCES IN GLOBAL LEADERSHIP  
VOLUME 13

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# NEW ADVANCES IN GLOBAL LEADERSHIP: INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME 13

This year was unusual in many respects. Little did we expect that our call for interdisciplinary research on Global Leadership would be of such relevance in the world's continuing attempt to battle the COVID-19 pandemic. As stated in our call for papers, we were:

...especially interested in *what other disciplines can contribute to better understand, conceptualize and develop global leadership*. Drawing on other disciplines not only helps a field of research to mature further, but it also helps embed it within the nomological network of related domains.

Beyond theory building and conceptual advancement, we have learnt in the last months that there is a great deal of important knowledge to be drawn and absorbed from multidisciplinary fields, as global leaders address complex, interdependent, and thorny challenges. In this regard, our call for papers could not have been more timely or relevant. As the world situation evolved with respect to COVID-19, so did our thinking as to what this volume should look like. For this reason, the typical papers found in Volume 13 are enhanced by two novel contributions. The first is comprised of contemporary reflections by leading Global Leadership scholars as well as global leaders who had to boldly face the reality of managing unprecedented large-scale problems and by practitioners who help and coach global leaders. In our invitation, we asked them to distill their thinking on the global leadership challenges faced by individuals and communities, as they tackle COVID-19 situations that are novel, complex, and filled with paradox. The resulting brief essays by 25 authors are fascinating snapshots in time, since only history and research will tell which leadership lessons and examples stand the test of time. The essays contain numerous insights that should prove useful for scholars and practitioners alike. The final chapter in this book, written by the editors, is our attempt to categorize and discuss these themes for future research purposes. The second novel contribution in Volume 13 resulted from another targeted invitation, this time to a global collaboration consultant. Demonstrating

his preference and talent for collaboration, this evolved into a multidisciplinary, collective writing effort by 21 thinkers and doers from around the world. After describing five success stories focusing on collaboration in crises for this volume of *AGL*, they extracted key lessons on global collaboration that, once again, are useful to both researchers and practitioners.

While the term “global leadership” has been defined in many ways, thereby blurring the conceptual boundaries of the distinct fields of global and comparative leadership, *AGL* adheres to the following narrower definition of global leadership:

The process and actions through which an individual influences a range of internal and external constituents from multiple national cultures and jurisdictions in a context characterized by significant levels of task and relationship complexity (Reiche, Bird, Mendenhall, & Osland, 2017, p. 556).

As is our practice, Volume 13 combines traditional research papers in Part I with practitioner-focused research, insights, and interviews in Part II, and a conclusion that identifies future research directions. The chapters in this volume are briefly introduced below.

## **PART I: CONCEPTUAL AND EMPIRICAL FINDINGS**

Part I begins with *Chapter 1*, the invited essays by 25 authors, entitled “Perspectives on Global Leadership and the COVID-19 Crisis.” Each essay is listed chronologically to reflect how the pandemic unfolded and influenced their thinking. The authors were given two weeks to write on the role of global leadership in the pandemic. The results range from very practical advice for working virtually, ideas and reflections on how global leaders are handling the crisis to proposed new concepts in global leadership. It is a fascinating and inspiring collection by thought leaders from all sectors.

In *Chapter 2*, “Identifying with Leaders from Another Race: The Impact of Pre-existing Leadership Assumptions and Eye Fixations,” Iain Densten explores the role of perceptive cues shaped by implicit leadership ideas and eye fixations in determining how followers identify with a leader from another race. The study draws on a sample of 55 Southeast Asian female participants who viewed a 27-second video of a Caucasian female leader. Specifically, Densten demonstrates that both preexisting leadership prototypes and antiprototypes, as well as eye movements, influenced how the participants answered the Identity Leadership Inventory, which measures prototypicality, advancement, entrepreneurship, and impresarioship. The study provides a compelling example of how global leaders’ effectiveness may be shaped by their followers’ culturally imprinted preferences. Given the increase in virtual interactions, it also points to the role of global leaders’ nonverbal communication behaviors in shaping followers’ evaluations of leader identities.

*Chapter 3*, “The 4 Cs of MNE Strategic Responses to Global Governance,” is a conceptual account by Sheila Puffer, David Wesley, Luis Alfonso Dau, and Elizabeth M. Moore. The researchers consider how MNEs address challenges to their ways of conducting business by intergovernmental organizations, international nongovernmental organizations, and nongovernmental organizations, all of which intend to shape global policy agendas. As such, Puffer and colleagues draw on global governance theory from political science, the responsible leadership literature, and the construct of situational strength to propose a typology of how firms can take strategic action. The framework distinguishes between both reactive versus proactive and combative versus collaborative orientations, leading to four distinct strategic responses: Collaborator, Complier, Counteractor, and Combatant. Importantly, the typology highlights how the situational strength of global governance organizations can impact MNEs’ choice of strategic responses and the likely implications this choice involves.

In *Chapter 4*, “What Makes for Successful Repatriate Knowledge Transfer? Implications for Repatriate Management and Global Leadership,” Joyce Osland, Betina Szkudlarek, Gary Oddou, Norihito Furuya, and Juergen Deller investigate the knowledge transfer experience of 47 repatriates returning from their international assignments to Germany, Japan, and the United States. This exploratory qualitative study portrays knowledge transfer as an iterative, interactive process whose success depends largely on the repatriate’s initiative, learning agility, transfer skills, adaptability, and capacity for influencing work unit members. Their findings highlight the role of six transfer skills that repatriates linked to effective transfer. The authors introduce an interactive model of the microprocess of repatriate knowledge transfer. In addition to contributing to theory building about the knowledge transfer process, the study’s results are of special relevance to global leaders who are either direct transferors of knowledge across cultural boundaries or who facilitate the process of knowledge transfer by other organizational members.

In *Chapter 5*, “How Global Leaders Learn from International Experience: Reviewing and Advancing Global Leadership Development,” Natalia Fey maps and analyzes the extant literature in her dissertation research to explore why an international experience has been linked to global leadership development, dating from the field’s initiation. Her database search found 42 articles that focused on international assignments, international corporate training programs, or short-term business travel that related to global leadership development. She analyzed the studies’ individual and organizational enablers as well as learning mechanisms. Her integration of the results indicates exactly what and how global leaders learn and lays a clear path for researchers who want to advance this important field of study.

## **PART II: THE PRACTITIONERS, CORNER**

*Chapter 6* features “Global Collaboration in Crises,” a global collaboration of 25 consultants and managers from around the world who integrate their

experience and wisdom on the topic of best practices in collaborative leadership in crisis contexts by first sharing minicase exemplars and then deriving “lessons learned” that global leaders can apply in their own lives. By exploring the collaborative dynamics of global/diverse teams in response to COVID-19, ecological crises, the Tohoku earthquake of 2011, the 2008 financial crisis, and Apartheid in South Africa, this large team of authors delineate practices that likely can be applied across crisis contexts and operate as “rules of thumb” for global leaders who wonder “What should I be primarily focusing on?” when a crisis erupts.

For *Chapter 7*, “An Interview with Hal Gregersen: The Art of Questioning in Global Leadership,” Mark Mendenhall interviewed Dr. Hal Gregersen, one of the pioneers in the field of global leadership. He was a coauthor of the seminal work, “Global Explorers: The Next Generation of Leaders” in 1999 that provided the field with one of the early competency frameworks. Since that time, he has studied innovation and the important role that questioning processes play in innovation and leadership. In their interview, they explore the role questioning plays in global leadership and the influence of curiosity in the questioning process. Dr. Gregersen provides insights on how global leaders can build a “questioning culture” in their organizations, why some global leaders are questioning-oriented and some are not, how they can enhance their capability to question more robustly, and the importance of focusing on “keystone questions” to empower one’s leadership.

*Chapter 8*, “How Does an Anthropologist Teach Global Leadership to Engineers? An Interview with Julia Gluesing,” features a gifted teacher-scholar who has spent over 30 years working in the automotive industry as a consultant, trainer, researcher, and teacher. Dr. Gluesing was interviewed by Joyce Osland who was particularly curious about the impact of her anthropology background and her career trajectory on her teaching. Dr. Gluesing spoke about her highly successful and unique approach to teaching engineers specifically. In this master class on teaching, she also shared her techniques for teaching culture and global leadership, along with a list of helpful resources.

In *Chapter 9*, “Practitioner Reflections from 25 Years of Developing Global Leadership,” Dr. Mark Frederick, a highly experienced consultant, describes how the field has changed and evolved. He helped develop the global leadership services at IOR (International Orientation Resources) in the field’s early days and eventually developed his own independent consulting practice. Mark explains the nuts and bolts of global leadership consulting, down to explaining how to choose the best assessment for each situation and structure virtual executive coaching sessions. He also shares best practices from global leadership development programs in leading companies. His knowledge and extensive experience are extremely useful for consultants as well as academics who teach and research global leadership development.

*Chapter 10*, “Reflections on Developing a Global Leadership Course,” authored by Davina Vora, explains all the considerations and details involved in setting up a global leadership course for the first time at a public, regional, US university. Although the number of global leadership courses are growing,

creating the first course of its kind on a campus involves pedagogy, logistics, marketing, and sometimes politics. Dr. Vora describes the need for fit with her students and institution. She explains the philosophy behind her course design as well as course assignments. This chapter ends with suggestions, recommendations, and lessons learned. This chapter is a very helpful guide to anyone tasked with developing a new course in global leadership.

Finally, in *Chapter 11*, “At the Heart and Beyond: What Can Global Leadership Researchers Learn from Perspectives on the COVID-19 Pandemic?,” the editors discuss common themes and emerging areas for future research that arise from the invited essays on the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, this chapter calls for strengthening the link of the global leadership domain with related research fields, expanding the set of necessary global leadership competencies, moving toward a more collective and collaborative understanding of global leadership, further enhancing the growing field of responsible global leadership, examining the various competing tensions that global leaders need to balance, and encouraging global leadership scholars to engage in greater reflexivity.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We’d like to acknowledge the work and commitment of those who made important behind-the-scenes contributions to this volume. We are indebted to Amber Stone-Galilee, our publisher at Emerald Publishing, Ltd., and to Akilandeswari Lakshmanan and Kavya Ramu and their entire production team for all the support we have received. Anu Sairaj merits special recognition for her role in coordinating and supervising the infinite details involved in manuscript preparation. Anouk Hagen was also extremely helpful in the final preparation of the chapters.

This book would not be possible without the funding Dr. Osland receives from the Lucas Foundation and their generosity to the Global Leadership Advancement Center, housed in the School of Global Innovation & Leadership at San Jose State University. She would also like to thank Dean Dan Moshavi and Belinda Nguyen for their support.

Mark Mendenhall is grateful for the support of the Gary W. Rollins College of Business and the J. Burton Frierson Chair of Excellence in Business Leadership at the University of Tennessee, Chattanooga.

Edited research volumes are often a labor of love, which is certainly true for this book. And while a team of four have formally edited this volume, an army of family members and friends facilitated and inspired the process. This volume is therefore dedicated to all the individuals who continue to support us, but whose names rarely surface through the official publication process.

- Joyce: To Asbjorn, Jessica, Joe, Michael, Anna, Katrina, Scott, and the grands: Zoe, Lucy, Jacob, Gavin, Izzy, and June.
- Betina: To my best friends Kasia and Vera whose support, wisdom, and love is always with me.

- Mark: To my wonderful grandchildren: Will, Amy, Tommy, James, Timothy, Ellie, and Mark.
- Sebastian: To my family, whose strength and support has been remarkable during these taxing times.

## REFERENCE

Reiche, B. S., Bird, A., Mendenhall, M. E., & Osland, J. S. (2017). Contextualizing leadership: A typology of global leadership roles. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 48, 552–572.

# OBITUARY AND MEMORIAL—BILL MOBLEY

Dr. William Hodges Mobley (November 15, 1941–March 25, 2020)



Dr. William Hodges Mobley, age 78, former President of Texas A&M University (1988–1993) and Former Chancellor of the Texas A&M University System (1993–1994) passed away in Austin, Texas on March 25, 2020 after an 18-month battle with cancer. He dedicated his life to nurturing talents in both the educational and business world.

During his service at Texas A&M, he was a strong proponent for diversity and for integrity in athletics. He promoted minority recruitment and expansion of international educational opportunities for students and faculty. Dr. Mobley was also instrumental in the initial planning of the George H. W. Bush Presidential Library at Texas A&M University.

Dr. Mobley spent the last twenty-five years developing executive talent in the United States and Asia. He founded the Global Research Consortium and the Hong Kong and Shanghai offices of Personnel Decisions International (PDI). As the founder and member of the board of directors of Mobley Group Pacific Ltd, he resided in Hong Kong and Shanghai, China, working with both academic institutions and international corporations to provide support for senior regional and national CEOs and Managing Directors in developing their plans for succession. He advised and coached executives on management and organizational skills. From 2002 to 2009, he served as Professor of Management at China Europe International Business School and became the first Professor Emeritus at CEIBS. A well-respected scholar, he published in leading journals on motivation,



leadership and organizational culture. He was the founder and executive editor of the first seven volumes of the *Advances in Global Leadership* series.

He earned his PhD in industrial and organizational psychology from the University of Maryland in 1971. He was a Fellow of the American Psychological Association (APA), Society for Industrial and Organizational Psychology (SIOP), and the Association for Psychological Science (APS), and a member of the Academy of Management (AOM) and the International Association for Applied Psychology (IAAP). He was awarded honorary degrees from several universities. In 2015, he was honored with the *Distinguished Psychologist in Management* award by the Society of Psychologists in Management.

Because Bill played such an important role in developing the field of global leadership and produced seven volumes of *Advances in Global Leadership*, we invited his co-editors to participate in this memorial.

Bill Mobley was a brilliant and talented man who had a real gift for people. He was able to connect with people and point them toward a shared goal, paving the way for their success. It was his leadership philosophy. He was a visionary who could get others excited about his vision, and then participate willingly in its execution, and always with good humor and encouragement. What I remember most about Bill was shared laughter and shared ideas.

M. Jocelyne Gessner Bay, PhD (*AGL*, vol. 1)  
 Director of Organizational Effectiveness  
 Bay & Associates

I had the good fortune to know Bill Mobley for many years starting in graduate school at the University of Maryland. All of the graduate students immediately knew that Bill was going to be a star. He was smart, engaging, and always helpful. Years later I had the pleasure of co-editing one of his *Advances in Global Leadership* books. His insight into the field of global leadership helped me gain new perspectives and ways of thinking about the influence of societal culture on leadership—an endeavor that has carried me well throughout my career. In short, Bill's career included being a role model for leaders as well as a great leadership scholar.

Peter W. Dorfman (*AGL*, vol. 3)  
 Professor Emeritus  
 New Mexico State University  
 Past President of GLOBE

Bill was my manager, mentor, co-author, and friend. I was extremely fortunate to have met Bill at the start of my career and to be guided and supported by him ever since. He was the person who inspired me, like he did to many others, to step into the fascinating field of organisational psychology. Bill's incredible intellect, generosity and energy has left a deep impact on many scholars, students, and business leaders across the world. He was not only a prominent scholar in global leadership, but also a legendary example of a global leader himself.

Ying (Lena) Wang (*AGL*, vol. 5–8)  
Senior Lecturer  
RMIT University, Australia

In 2007, I started working with Bill co-editing the *Advances in Global Leadership*. I was very fortunate to see with my own eyes how Bill was a true global leader who inspired and nurtured the talents of all around him. His legacy will live on.

Ming (Lily) Li (*AGL*, vol. 5–11)  
Senior Lecturer in International Human Resource Management  
University of Liverpool Management School

I was honored that Bill entrusted *Advances in Global Leadership* to us. He did a wonderful job of seeking out and publishing authors from all over the world. Thanks to Bill and his co-editors, *AGL* is the publication outlet that is home to the largest number of articles related to leadership in a global context. He was truly a renaissance man.

Joyce Osland (*AGL*, vol. 8–13)  
Senior Editor  
*Advances in Global Leadership*

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PART I

EMPIRICAL FINDINGS

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# PERSPECTIVES ON GLOBAL LEADERSHIP AND THE COVID-19 CRISIS

J. S. Osland, M. E. Mendenhall, B. S. Reiche,  
B. Szkudlarek, R. Bolden,  
P. Courtice, V. Vaiman, M. Vaiman, D. Lyndgaard,  
K. Nielsen, S. Terrell, S. Taylor, Y. Lee, G. Stahl,  
N. Boyacigiller, T. Huesing, C. Miska, M. Zilinskaite,  
L. Ruiz, H. Shi, A. Bird, T. Soutphommasane,  
A. Girola, N. Pless, T. Maak, T. Neeley,  
O. Levy, N. Adler and M. Maznevski

## ABSTRACT

*As the world struggled to come to grips with the Covid-19 pandemic, over twenty scholars, practitioners, and global leaders wrote brief essays for this curated chapter on the role of global leadership in this extreme example of a global crisis. Their thoughts span helpful theoretical breakthroughs to essential, pragmatic adaptations by companies.*

**Keywords:** Covid-19; crisis management; global leadership; complexity; uncertainty; competing tensions

After pondering how we as scholars might help in the COVID-19 pandemic, we issued the following invitation on March 30, 2020.

*As co-editors of *Advances in Global Leadership*, we have been pondering the role of global leadership in pandemics, given the current COVID-19 crisis. Because this topic has not been addressed previously, we decided to add to the forthcoming volume 13 a chapter entitled "Perspectives on Global Leadership and the COVID-19 Crisis" that consists of analyses written by global leaders, practitioners, and global leadership scholars. We would be honored if you would join this project and write at least a one or two page perspective by April 14th. We will curate all the submissions into one article that will be co-authored by all of you.*

*We realize this is a short time period (a necessity given the manuscript deadline), but we thought it would be interesting to put ourselves in the same type of context that global leaders find themselves in – inadequate time and ability to gather enough data to make firm conclusions, quick deadlines wherein a decision must be made, uncertainty, and high risk for having one's ideas and decisions be seen as being woefully in error when looked back upon from the future. In fact, we are giving you two full weeks to write when global leaders have to assess situations, analyze them, and then make decisions often in a day or less.*

*You are free to analyze and share your perspectives from any lens, perspective, angle, or genre of writing that you would like. The only boundary conditions are that your analysis should focus on how global leaders/global leadership have impacted the human response to the COVID-19 pandemic. AGL generally relies on the following construct definitions of global leadership:*

*The process of influencing the thinking, attitudes, and behaviors of a global community to work together synergistically toward a common vision and common goals (Adler, 2001; Festing, 2001).*

*The process and actions through which an individual inspires and influences a range of internal and external constituents from multiple national cultures and jurisdictions in a context characterized by significant levels of task and relationship complexity (adapted from Reiche, Bird, Mendenhall, & Osland, 2017).*

*We hope that you will participate in this invitation to write under similar conditions that global leaders find themselves in – having to make decisions and take action on multiple issues simultaneously in a VUCA context – and that you will find the challenge to do so both an interesting and exciting one. Please let us know if you are up for the challenge.*

To our delight, 22 collaborators accepted our challenge to share their insights and wisdom. We did not edit their work (other than the random comma, etc.). We also excerpted the work of two authors that was already in print. As with our usual submissions, we have divided them into Scholarly Perspectives and Practitioner Perspectives. Their order is chronological according to the date of submission (or publication in the case of the two excerpts). This chronology provides another window onto how rapidly the crisis unfolded and changed, along with our perspectives.

Please note that these perspectives reflect only the authors' opinions on topics of their choice; they do not reflect the opinions of their employers or the AGL editors.

## SCHOLARLY PERSPECTIVES

# Leadership, Complexity, and Change: Learning from the COVID-19 Pandemic

**Richard Bolden**

**March 27, 2020**

What a difference a few days make... Perhaps it's the sunny spring days after a long, wet winter; the dog walks spent chatting with teenagers who would normally be off at school; the unexpected free space in my diary with no expectation that I should be in the office; or because so much of what we take for granted has changed so suddenly.

At the time of writing we are in the fourth day of the lockdown called by the UK government to slow the spread of the COVID-19 virus. It's been a tense few weeks as the wave of infections grew ever closer – no longer focused within a far and distant sounding part of China but causing havoc across Italy, France, Spain, the UK and now it seems, pretty much every part of the world. A quarter of the global population – a staggering 2 billion people – are currently in some form of lockdown, confined to their homes in order to slow the spread of the virus and, in so doing, allow time for governments and health services to prepare for the spike in patient numbers and the inevitable rising death toll.

Almost overnight UWE, Bristol – like universities, schools, and colleges around the world – closed its doors and shifted from face-to-face to online delivery. Staff and students have responded with huge adaptability – revising delivery and assessment processes that would have taken months, if not years, through traditional channels. The speed and the scale of changes for organizations in every sector and location are unprecedented. Manufacturers have switched their operations to enable the production of essential items such as ventilators, face masks, hand sanitizer, and paracetamol that are now in such high and urgent demand. Governments have drawn up detailed plans to support individuals and organizations at risk of redundancy/bankruptcy – casting aside the usual economic concerns to focus on social priorities such as protecting the vulnerable, supporting those in financial difficulty and strengthening core public services (particularly health and social care). And communities have rallied together in ways not seen since World War II – providing support and reassurance for the elderly and isolated; sacrificing personal liberties for collective benefit; and finding new ways to connect, communicate, and collaborate.

In the words of the Chinese curse we are indeed living in interesting times (1) – both fraught with risk and opportunity. The turbulence of the last few years has revealed deep divisions within society, as illustrated particularly clearly in the Brexit vote within the UK and Trump presidency in the US. The rise of populism



has been associated with skepticism and distrust of experts and evidence, with social media providing the perfect echo chamber for amplifying the polarity of perspectives and questioning the nature of “truth.” Differing ideologies and beliefs have been positioned in opposition to one another – them and us, winners and losers, do or die – rather than as an inevitable and desirable characteristic of a diverse and inclusive society, which enables creativity, adaptability, and resilience in times of complexity, uncertainty, and change.

One of the remarkable consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic has been how quickly it has reset the dial on many of these issues – fostering calls for compassion, solidarity, and collective action. At times like this, it is our similarities rather than our differences that define us. This is as true for those in positions of power and privilege as those who are marginalized and/or find themselves living in precarity. We are all susceptible to the virus, all have people we care about who are likely to become very ill or perhaps even die should they catch it, and will all be affected by the economic and social impacts of the outbreak – not just for the months that it lasts but for years to come. The capacity of individuals, families, organizations, communities, and nations to weather the storm is not equal, however, with those with least access to financial, emotional, and other resources most likely to bear the brunt of the suffering.

An unexpected outcome of COVID-19 is the impact on the environment. The reduction in pollution levels around the world during just the relatively short time in which travel, manufacturing, and other environmentally damaging activities have been reduced demonstrates both how directly human activity impacts on the environment and the remarkable ability of the environment, and the animals and plants within it, to recover if given the opportunity. For those who have been calling for a step change for policy, practice, and behavior toward a more sustainable way of life, there is no more compelling evidence of the extent to which this is possible and the environmental benefits it would produce.

For those of us interested in leadership research, education, and practice, there are many important lessons to take from the current situation. I’m sure everyone will have their own take on events but as a starter for ten here are a few of my own takeaways so far.

- **Shared purpose** – After winning a significant majority in the general election of December 2019, Boris Johnson and his government focused on building a sense of urgency and commitment to “getting Brexit done” that largely entrenched rather than unified opinions around this issue. With COVID-19 the focus has completely shifted to a shared purpose that unites rather than divides individuals and communities. It took a little while to get to this point but, for now at least, the nation is far more unified around a common purpose than it has been for many years.
- **Collective leadership** – While there is a tendency to equate “leadership” with the traits and behaviors of individual “leaders,” the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrates the need for individuals and groups to work concurrently and collaboratively in order to achieve leadership outcomes. In daily news briefings,

Prime Minister Johnson and members of the cabinet have stood alongside the Chief Medical Officer and other experts to provide clarity and direction to an uncertain population. While this is perhaps the most visible “leadership” at national level, it is abundantly clear that it is dependent on significant acts of leadership elsewhere as well as the active “followership” of those responding to calls for care and consideration.

- **Systems change** – The COVID-19 pandemic is an inherently complex problem that requires expertise and effort from multiple domains to make sense of the issues and to mobilize timely and effective responses. The concept of “systems leadership,” increasingly advocated within public services, highlights the need to influence and leverage engagement across organizational, professional, and other boundaries. Frequently this means needing to lead without formal authority – to work with principles of complexity and systems thinking to initiate new patterns of behavior that spread from one context to another. It also involves dismantling and rebuilding systems, structures, and processes – both physical and psychological – that constrain rather than enable transformation and change.
- **Sensemaking** – In times of ambiguity and uncertainty, leadership has a key role to play in helping people to make sense of the situation(s) in which they find themselves. The people who will be recognized as “leaders” are those who are able to frame the context in a way that acknowledges the nature and severity of the issue(s), addresses the concerns of their constituents, and which provides a degree of clarity about the actions/responses that are required. Within the US, Andrew Cuomo, the Governor of New York, has emerged as a key national figure in mobilizing the response to COVID-19 – providing far greater clarity and direction than Trump and now being mooted as the democratic candidate for the next US election despite not even standing as a nominee.
- **Place-based leadership** – While many national figures have struggled to grapple with the scale and implications of the issues posed by COVID-19, local leaders have often responded far quicker and been more effective at mobilizing public, private, voluntary, and community groups and organizations to collaborate and respond. Place-based leadership is responsive to the context that surrounds it – drawing together multiple perspectives and expertise to address issues of concern to citizens within a particular locale – and will be essential not only in dealing with the immediate effects of COVID-19 but in the long period of rebuilding and recovery that will follow the pandemic.

These are just a few initial reflections, and there is far more that could be said. Looking forward I have no doubt that the spring of 2020 will be seen as a defining moment in our understanding of and engagement with leadership, complexity, and change. I only hope that we learn the lessons and make use of them to create a stronger, healthier, kinder, safer world rather than defaulting back to the divisive and destructive policies, practices, and behaviors that preceded the current crisis.

*Source:* Published with permission of the Bristol Leadership and Change Centre Blog at <https://blogs.uwe.ac.uk/leadership-and-change/leadership-complexity-and-change-learning-from-the-covid-19-pandemic/>.

**Richard Bolden** is an experienced Researcher and Educator in the fields of leadership, management, and organizational psychology. He has worked at the Center for Leadership Studies since 2000, conducting a range of applied studies of leadership and leadership development across different contexts and sectors (including small and medium enterprises, Higher Education, leadership competencies, and international development). In addition to his research, Richard teaches and supervises students on a range of programs including the BA in Management and Leadership, MBA, and CPD scheme. Prior to this, Richard was involved in software development in France and as a research psychologist at the Institute of Work Psychology in Sheffield. He has an extensive publication history including numerous journal articles, book chapters, conference papers, and research reports. His international experience includes sub-Saharan Africa, France, Egypt, and the Balkans.

## COVID-19 AND CREATING THE FUTURE WE WANT

Dame Polly Courtice  
April 2, 2020

Many people will be feeling uncertain, anxious, and even scared. And, of course for others, things have already reached crisis point. But if there is any solace to be had, it is that we are facing this unique moment in history together, 7.8 billion of us, going through the same experience at the same time, creating an unprecedented bond between us.

It is tempting to talk about getting “back to normal,” but we will almost certainly not go back to the way things were. In fact, going back to “normal” is also not what many millions of people aspire to or deserve. For many, the current system has failed to deliver health, well-being, and prosperity. Now that the lack of resilience in the “old” system has been revealed, alongside our ability to mobilize vast sums of money and resources when the economy is at risk, expectations will have been raised about what else is now possible in the face of other crises.

Globally, we have to take this moment to reflect on the need to change and transform our society; to explore lessons from the past and reset our expectations for the future. The shocks to the system that we are experiencing now, and anticipate in future, raise so many questions about the things that we have taken for granted, and demonstrate what is possible when we need to respond urgently. Given how many system shocks we see as coming – this is a crucial time to be asking some big questions.