City Research Online

City St George's, University of London

Citation: Empson, L. & Langley, A. (2015). Leadership and Professionals: Multiple Manifestations of Influence in Professional Service Firms. In: Empson, L., Muzio, D., Broschak, J. & Hinings, B. (Eds.), The Oxford Handbook of Professional Service Firms. (pp. 163-188). Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780199682393

This is the accepted version of the paper.

This version of the publication may differ from the final published version. To cite this item please consult the publisher's version.

Permanent repository link: https://openaccess.city.ac.uk/id/eprint/15427/

Copyright and Reuse: Copyright and Moral Rights remain with the author(s) and/or copyright holders. Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, unless otherwise indicated, provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way. For full details of reuse please refer to City Research Online policy.

City Research Online: http://openaccess.city.ac.uk/ publications@citystgeorges.ac.uk

To be published and cited as:
Empson, L., & Langley, A. (2015) "Leadership and Professionals: Multiple Manifestations of Influence in Professional Service Firms". In *Oxford Handbook of Professional Service Firms*, Empson, L., Muzio, D., Broschak, J.P. & Hinings, B. (Eds), Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Abstract

This chapter examines the foci, resources and mechanisms of leadership in professional service firms, a context where traditional conceptions of leadership and followership are problematic given the importance of individual autonomy to knowledge-based work. We argue that leadership in professional service firms is, above all, a process of interaction among professionals seeking to exercise influence at the individual,organizational, and strategic level. It is manifested explicitly through professional expertise, discretely through political interaction, and implicitly through personal embodiment. We suggest that these resources are rarely combined in single individuals, which gives rise to the prevalence of collective forms of leadership, supported by embedded mechanisms of social control that channel professional activity.

Keywords: Plural leadership, Covert leadership, Collective leadership, Championing, Consensus-building, Meaning-making, Pluralism, Political skills

<H1>Introduction

Conventional models of leadership are predicated on the assumption that leaders, by definition, must have followers (Avolio et al. 2009; Howell and Shamir 2005). In a professional service firm, the distinction between "leaders" and "followers" is problematic as traditional hierarchical dyadic relationships are replaced by more ambiguous and negotiated relationships amongst professional peers (Adler et al. 2008). As a result "leadership is a matter of guiding, nudging, and persuading" (Greenwood et al. 1990: 748). According to Fenton and Pettigrew (2006: 102), therefore, "there is not much to be gained from taking existing theories of leadership as a lens for interpretation" of leadership in professional service firms. The distinctive challenges of professional service firm leadership derive from two interrelated organizational characteristics: extensive individual autonomy and contingent managerial authority (Mintzberg 1979, 1983). Experienced professionals require, or at least expect, extensive individual autonomy (Miner et al. 1994; Von Glinow 1988). This autonomy is legitimated by the requirement for professionals to preserve the right to make choices about how best to apply their specialist technical expertise to the delivery of customized professional services; it is perpetuated by the fact that the core value-creating resources of a professional service firm — the technical knowledge and client relationships — are often proprietary to specific professionals (Empson 2001a).

This emphasis on relatively extensive individual autonomy is associated with contingent managerial authority (Greenwood et al. 1990). In organizations of professionals, authority is "collegial and fragile" (Hinings, Brown, and Greenwood, 1991) and deemed to rest with the professional peer group rather than the individual (Marcson, 1962). Clan control, i.e., behavior controlled through common values, traditions, and commitment to the organization (Ouchi, 1980) is the norm and power rests with professionals in the operating core

(Mintzberg, 1983). Professional service firms' senior executives are selected, and often elected, by their peers to formal leadership roles for a fixed term of office and can be deposed if they fail to retain the support of their peers (Empson 2007). As Mintzberg (1989: 181) states, a senior executive in a professional service firm "maintains power only as long as the professionals perceive him or her to be serving their interests effectively." This is particularly so in partnerships, the prevailing form of governance within the traditional professions such as law and accounting (Greenwood and Empson 2003), but is also common in corporate professional service firms which mimic the characteristics of professional partnership governance (Empson and Chapman 2006). As a result, the formal authority of senior executives in professional service firms is contingent. They can only lead by consent. As we will argue in this chapter, they need to be acutely aware of the implicit power structures and shifting networks of influence among their colleagues and have highly developed political skills in order to navigate and negotiate these networks of influence.

In spite of their distinctiveness, professional service firms have received very little direct attention from leadership scholars, perhaps because of the difficulty of isolating notions of leadership and followership in settings where they tend to converge. Conversely, despite some recognition of the influence of the professions in macro-level institutional change (O'Reilly and Reed 2011; Scott 2008), scholars of professional service firms have generally neglected the theme of leadership within the firms themselves. This may reflect the fact that such scholars tend to be oriented towards organizational theory or strategy and "the domains of strategy and organizational theory have been ignoring the critical role of leadership" (Miller and Sardais 2011: 175). Alternatively it could be, as Alvesson (2004: 137) states, that "apart from at certain stages such as the foundation and early expansion of a firm and during crises calling for conflict-ridden changes, leadership is probably a less important aspect of

(professional service firms) than of many other organizations". We dispute this final assertion. In this chapter we will demonstrate that, while leadership in the conventional sense may not be immediately apparent within a professional service firm, *it permeates all aspects of professional work and all levels of the firm but needs to be conceptualized in such a way as to recognize how it is distinctive from leadership in conventional hierarchical organizations.*

In this chapter we seek to rectify management scholars' apparent neglect of the topic of leadership in professional service firms. Specifically, we seek to emphasize the subtle and distinctive characteristics of leading professionals that are present to varying degrees within any organization of knowledge workers, where individual autonomy is enshrined within the work processes. We begin by establishing a "working definition" of leadership in professional service firms which emphasizes the centrality of influencing in the process of leadership in this context. We develop a conceptual framework of leadership in professional service firms by drawing upon professional service firm studies which shed light on the topic of leadership, together with studies of leadership in other contexts, focusing on professionals in settings such as health care, academia, the arts, where similar leadership dynamics are likely to apply (e.g., Cohen and March 1986; Denis et al. 1996; Denis et al. 2001; Reid and Karambayya 2009). Our conceptual framework identifies nine manifestations of leadership in professional service firms and highlights the multiple foci of influence that leadership of professional service firms encompasses and the multiple resources and mechanisms for influencing at leaders' disposal. We argue that a single individual is unlikely to perform these multiple and distinctive leadership roles equally effectively and suggest this helps explain the prevalence of plural forms of leadership in professional service firms, where multiple individuals perform distinctive leadership roles and negotiate their shared roles space on an ongoing basis (Denis et al. 2012). We conclude by refining our definition of leadership,

reemphasizing the dearth of empirically rigorous and theoretically informed studies of leadership in professional service firms, and outlining important areas for future research.

<H1>Conceptualizing leadership in professional service firms

<H2>*A working definition*

Many authors have deplored the confusion that surrounds the definition of leadership (Alvesson and Spicer 2011; Barker 1997; Miller and Sardais 2011; Yukl 1989) Within the literature on professional service firms, the term leadership rarely appears but, when it does, it is often used interchangeably with, or in place of, various other terms including: strategic management (Løwendahl 2005); administration (Mintzberg 1989); decision making (Morris et al. 2010); and entrepreneurship (Strannegård 2012). For example, the title of Mintzberg's (1998) article, "Covert leadership: Notes on *managing* professionals" (emphasis added) exemplifies a terminological ambiguity concerning the concepts of leadership and management which is often present within professional service firms themselves. The leadership literature more generally is replete with definitions. Yukl (1989) argues that the multitude of definitions have little more in common beyond an agreement that leadership involves influencing. Alvesson and Spicer (2011: 9) caution that, by defining the term so broadly "leadership can easily become everything and nothing." As Miller and Sardais (2011: 175) argue, "we need a concept of leadership that is neither too broad to be useful nor too narrow to be applicable." As a starting point for this chapter, we adopt a broad working definition to enable us to draw upon a wide range of studies that can shed light on the phenomenon of leadership in professional service firms. Following Yukl's classic and heavily cited overview of the leadership literature (1989: 253) we begin by defining leadership as: "influencing task objectives and strategies, influencing commitment and compliance in task

behavior to achieve these objectives, influencing group maintenance and identification, and influencing the culture of an organization."

Yukl's definition highlights how the activity of leadership permeates multiple aspects of work and multiple levels within a firm. Influence can be exercised at the individual and group level as well as the organizational and strategic level. As we will demonstrate, these multiple foci of influence underpin the conceptual framework of leadership in professional service firms which we have developed.

<H2>*Developing the conceptual framework*

We began by identifying studies of professional service firms which shed light on the topic of leadership, exploring themes such as governance and organizational change. We also drew upon studies of leadership more generally which we deemed most relevant to the professional service firm context, particularly those which emphasize leadership as processual and plural. We sought to make explicit and synthesize the insights these studies offered into leadership in professional service firms.

Unusually for an academic literature review, we also drew on practitioner studies. We did this for two reasons. First, while there has been very little rigorous scholarly research into leadership in professional service firms, the topic has attracted considerable attention from practitioner-oriented writers (Broderick 2011; DeLong et al. 2007; Lorsch and Tierney 2002; Maister 1981, 1993). The plethora of practitioner texts reflects the fact that there is a substantial market for advice and executive education programs about professional service firm leadership among senior executives who find themselves struggling to perform these roles. Second, the most popular practitioner-oriented texts have inevitably influenced how

leaders of professional service firms construct and interpret their roles and will inevitably shape how they report their activities to researchers. While practitioner texts may lack a systematic empirical basis or rigorous methodological and theoretical underpinnings, they can help to identify what we intuitively "understand" about professional service firm leadership and, by making this explicit, help us to develop an empirically grounded critique of taken-for-granted assumptions.

As we read these various bodies of literature, we accumulated sets of keywords used to characterize the phenomenon of leadership. We then organized these keywords into separate clusters and groupings, seeking to identify points of similarity and difference and searching for the key dimensions underlying these distinctions. We then returned to the literature in order to refine and amplify our emerging conceptual framework. This process ultimately culminated in our development of a conception of leadership in professional service firms as constituted through two dimensions: focus of influence and resources for influencing.
<INSERT TABLE 1 HERE>

<H2>*Manifestations of leadership in professional service firms*

The first dimension of our conceptual framework (see Table 1) concerns the *focus of influence,* which encompasses the *individual and group* as well as the *organizational and strategic* level. This emphasis on influence is implicit in Yukl's (1989) definition of leadership above, which also encompasses the multiple foci of influence we have highlighted. The second dimension concerns *resources for influencing*. We classify these as *professional, political* and *personal*. We also identify three *mechanisms for influencing* associated with these resources: *expertise, interaction,* and *embodiment.* Together these represent three ways in which senior executives in professional service firms can enact their multiple

manifestations of leadership: by "having" professional expertise, by "doing" political interaction, and by "being" a personal embodiment of the values which professionals are supposed to enact in this context. Our triad of resources and mechanisms for influencing can be related to three key systems of influence identified by Mintzberg (1983) in his book on power in and around organizations: the systems of expertise, politics and ideology.
In the following sections, we examine each of the cells shown in Table 1 in turn, identifying and synthesizing the relevant literature. We structure the discussion around each of the three resources and mechanisms for influencing.

<H2>*Leadership grounded in professional expertise*

The emphasis on *professional expertise* as a core resource and mechanism for influencing reflects the notion of professional organizations as "meritocracies" (Mintzberg 1983), where the central system of influence is expertise rather bureaucratic authority. Multiple authors have suggested that, while professional organizations may explicitly espouse egalitarian values and commitment to autonomy, they are nevertheless characterized by informal hierarchies that may be more or less explicit and are often related to recognized technical expertise and professional seniority (Brown et al. 2010; Diefenbach and Sillince 2011; Robertson and Swan 2003). In other words, leadership and professional expertise in professional service firms are often intimately related.

Professional expertise can be a resource for influencing in multiple ways. At an individual and group level it is embedded in the apprenticeship model of skills transfer through *coaching* which is fundamental to the professional socialization and training process in professional service firms (Anderson-Gough et al. 2000, 2001, 2002). At an organizational level, professional expertise is deployed in *balancing* the professional service firm through

the careful alignment of the firm's economic and organizational models. Professional expertise also represents a resource for influencing at a strategic level, specifically when it is mobilized by entrepreneurial professionals *championing* new initiatives (Strannegård 2012). We now explore the literature on each of these in more depth.

<H2>*Coaching*

The apprenticeship model, which is a fundamental element of the professional development process, enables trainee professionals (as well as more senior professionals) to learn both the technical and interpersonal skills required in their job through close observation of, and detailed discussions with, their more experienced colleagues (Anderson-Gough et al. 2000, 2001, 2002; Faulconbridge 2006). See Faulconbridge's chapter in this Handbook for a more detailed discussion of this process. In the accredited professions, professional qualifications provide a mechanism for transferring explicit knowledge and within firms, formalized knowledge management systems can also play a role in knowledge transfer. The most valuable professional expertise, however, is tacit (Empson 2001b) and transferred via one-to-one coaching. Werr and Stjernberg (2003) show for example how the codified methods and case histories that form part of generic knowledge management systems in major consulting firms such as Accenture and Cap Gemini Ernst & Young are complemented by individualized and group-level coaching based on tacit knowledge and experience. The coaching process goes beyond a simple transfer of technical expertise to encompass more personalized coaching in interpersonal skills. Leaders in this context manifest their influence by helping to shape the identity of their juniors (Ibarra 1999) and by helping them develop the professional judgment they need to apply this appropriately to deliver a customized service to their clients and to manage their own teams. Leaders in this context need to apply

their finely tuned professional expertise to decide which professionals need more or less coaching and what form that coaching should take.

Coaching represents a key theme in the practitioner literature on leading professionals. For example Maister (1993) devotes only one brief section to leadership in his entire book but this is presented as coaching. Maister emphasizes the need for "highly individualized closed door counseling" where the practice leader can act as the professional's "chief cheerleader" and "chief critic". Similarly, Lorsch and Tierney (2002) refer to "starmaking" as even more critical than "rainmaking" to the development and survival of the professional service firm, and argue that it is often under-recognized area of leadership activity in these firms.

<H2>*Balancing*

The concept of "balancing" in a professional service firm context was coined by Maister (1985) who argued that leaders of professional service firms must struggle at all times to align the economic and organizational models of the firm in order to compete simultaneously in the market for professional services and professional staff. Balancing concerns issues such as: how many trainees to hire, what proportion of managers to promote to partner, what level of attrition to embed within the up-or-out model, how to trade off income-generating with reputation-building work, and how to split profits. Balancing can therefore be seen as representing the core management activities of the firm but is about more than that. Balancing a professional service firm also requires leadership; leaders of a professional service firm must make use of their expertise in order to achieve the requisite balance.

For example, decisions about which professionals to make up to partner and how to split profits among the partner group are at one level about quality control of professional work

but also encompass cultural issues, as they demonstrate which behaviors are appropriate and which are penalized among professional staff. As Empson et al. (2013) have shown, such decisions cannot be taken by management professionals on the basic of their *management* expertise because of the difficulty in evaluating the delivery of highly customized, specialized, and intangible services. Instead they remain the preserve of the senior executives who utilize the experience and legitimacy they have acquired through the development of their *professional* expertise over many years of fee-earning activity. Senior executives must also have the professional credibility among their peers to persuade them to accept the decisions that are required to "balance" the firm. In a professional service firm such decisions cannot simply be imposed by management fiat but requires subtle leadership to persuade influential professionals to accept constraints.

<H2>*Championing*

The entrepreneurial ethos is deeply embedded in the founding myth of many professional service firms. The largest professional service firms were typically established by entrepreneurial individuals who identified and exploited market opportunities, i.e., who championed innovations within their professional domain. For example, Kiechel's (2010) popular book *The Lords of Strategy* focuses on the emergence of specialized strategy consultants and the entrepreneurs that invented this new domain of expertise (including Bruce Henderson of BCG; Bill Bain of Bain & Company, Michael Porter of Monitor Corporation). Starbuck (1993) describes the key role that the founders of law firm Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz (and more particularly Marty Lipton — the inventor of the "poison pill") played in creating a distinctive strategic niche. In so doing these entrepreneurs were applying their specialist professional expertise to define and implement strategic direction for the firm, as

well as (at least in these examples) championing innovations that significantly changed the shape of business practices well beyond the firm's boundaries (Suddaby and Viale 2011).

Looking at relatively recently established professional service firms, even Alvesson (2004), who with Sveningsson (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003c) articulated the concept of "non-leadership" in professional service firms, acknowledges that "in some cases…there are one or two central actors, often the founders of the firm, who have guru status and these people may have considerable influence" (p 123). These individuals may belie the traditional view of professional service firm leadership as peer-based and consensual; evolving beyond these founder-champions can represent an intensely risky stage in the development of a professional service firm (Empson 2012). If these firms are able to survive and grow beyond the retirement of the founders, the entrepreneurial ethos must remain embedded within them. Indeed, professional expertise is the basis for entrepreneurial leadership in larger professional service firms as individuals identify and champion opportunities through their professional practice (see Reihlen and Werr chapter in this Handbook and Strannegård 2012). In this context, entrepreneurial professionals may be dispersed across the firm but may have an influence at the strategic level as their "pet projects" gain traction and become organizationally embedded. Anand et al. (2007) studied the processes underlying new practice development in professional service firms, whereby entrepreneurial professionals drew upon their in-depth understanding of existing professional practices to extend and apply existing frameworks and develop differentiated service offerings. In so doing, they demonstrated "socialized agency" and "differentiated expertise". These two elements illustrate the key role of professional expertise as a resource for this championing in the context of strategic leadership. In order for practice development to be successful, leaders also need to embed their initiatives externally with clients and internally with colleagues

through a process of legitimation (see also Gardner et al. 2008; Heusinkveld and Benders 2005). Thus while expertise, and the autonomy that accompanies it, lie at the root of entrepreneurial professional leadership, it is not enough. Champions also need political skill to win support for their innovative initiatives more generally across the firm.

<H1>Leadership grounded in political interaction

Because professional service firms bring together multiple experts protective of their autonomy and disinclined towards followership, *political interaction* represents another key mechanism for influencing professionals (see Cohen and March 1986; Denis et al. 2007 for academic and health care professionals, respectively). As Morris et al. (2010: 297) state, professional service firms are "uniquely political environments…many traditional professional partnerships are consensus-based democracies but as such they are subject to the lobbying, scheming, and bargaining which occurs in any other political arena to achieve agreement on decisions among diverse individuals and interest groups." At an individual level this political interaction may take the form of *nurturing.* Through their nurturing activities leaders exercise influence through careful and sustained one-to-one interaction with key professionals, seeking to understand better their colleagues' concerns and motivations and attempting to respond appropriately to win their support (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003c). At an organizational level this political interaction may take the form of *enabling,* whereby the leaders of a professional service firm facilitate the initiatives of their entrepreneurial colleagues by encouraging them to take action and removing impediments to action (Empson 2001a). At a strategic level, political interaction becomes manifested through the process of *consensus-building,* whereby leaders negotiate with their colleagues to achieve a degree of strategic alignment across the partnership as a whole (Adler et al. 2008; Denis et al. 2007)

<H2>*Nurturing*

Coaching implies a transfer of professional expertise to influence the way that individuals and groups sell and deliver professional services and manage themselves and colleagues. By contrast, nurturing focuses on the more interpersonal and ultimately political interactions by which leaders seek to influence their fellow professionals. The professionals experiencing this nurturing may not be aware it is taking place as the process is subtle. Mintzberg (1998) emphasizes that, since senior professionals are highly trained and highly motivated individuals who know what to do, they require little direction and supervision from their formal leaders. Professionals need protection and support. Leaders, he argues, should focus on encouraging professionals and removing obstacles to getting their work done. In this context, Mintzberg says, "covert leadership may be far more important than overt leadership" (p. 144). The leader determines what the professional should be motivated to do and which obstacles to remove and which to retain. As such, this nurturing activity encompasses a political subtext.

Alvesson and Sveningsson take this idea further in three articles about leadership in professional service firms: "The great disappearing act: difficulties of 'doing' leadership" (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003a); "Managers doing leadership: the extra-ordinarization of the mundane" (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003b), and "… (non) leadership in a knowledge intensive firm" (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003c). These studies emphasize that, while senior managers in professional service firms may make substantial claims about their role and significance as leaders, the activities they describe are often "passive, vague, and fragmented" (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003a: 376). When asked how they spend their time, these individuals stress three activities: "listening, chatting, and being cheerful"

(Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003b: 1436). Senior managers believe these are important activities in their own right, not simply a means of building consensus. These interactions enable key professionals to feel valued, supported, and cared for; helping to ensure that they remain in the firm and motivated to do their best work. Similarly, in his description of an exceptionally successful law firm, Wachtell, Lipton, Rosen & Katz, Starbuck (1993: 908) quotes a respondent lauding the style of one of the founding partners, "George Katz . . . embodied [the] family style. He visited all the offices almost every day, bringing encouragement or news or gossip . . . Always optimistic, George would report on current matters and ask for advice from everyone on thorny legal questions, giving even the new junior associates the sense that their participation was valuable." Leadership influence through nurturing is hard to pin down, to the point where Alvesson and Sveningsson wonder if what is claimed to be leadership really deserves the label. Yet, to the extent that such activities contribute to building trust, loyalty and cohesion in a workforce inclined towards autonomy (and, by extension, individualism), nurturing can be interpreted as fundamental to the evolution and development of professional service firms.

<H2>*Enabling*

Mintzberg's articulation of covert leadership among professionals applies at the organizational as well as the individual level. Cohen and March's (1986) study of university presidents emphasizes that these leaders seem to have little formal power, but they can sometimes achieve considerable influence through unobtrusive action and even self-effacement. In the highly political and status-conscious setting of a professional service firm, drawing glory towards oneself may be counterproductive. However, acting behind the scenes to remove roadblocks and allow colleagues to take credit for substantive initiatives aligned with the strategic goals of the firm may be highly effective. Cohen and March (1986) call

this, "exchanging status for substance". For example, in a study of the development of health care networks, Martin et al. (2009) noted the effectiveness of a "quiet" form of leadership on the part of senior physicians in relation to their colleagues, as compared with a directive style.

Similarly studies of successful change processes in professional service firms have highlighted the significance of apparent leadership inaction in influencing organizational outcomes. Leaders of professional service firms cannot drive change in the conventional top-down sense (Greenwood et al. 1994) but they can enable it. Some of their fellow professionals, at least the most entrepreneurial among them, will use their expertise to take the initiative themselves (Empson 2000), a form of individual level leadership discussed earlier under "championing". In such an environment, an important role of senior leaders may be to enable other's initiatives by removing impediments and facilitating their colleagues' entrepreneurialism (Anand et al. 2007).

For example, the senior leadership in Empson's (2000, 2001a, 2001b) studies of mergers in the consulting and accounting sectors appeared to be abrogating responsibility to their more entrepreneurial colleagues. In all of the mergers studied the senior leaders did very little during the first year post merger in order to reassure professional staff that their autonomy would not be impinged upon. The more entrepreneurial professionals (i.e., the champions) sought out like-minded colleagues in the merger partner firm and began to explore ways of working together. In time, the facilitative passivity of the senior leadership group came to be seen by their colleagues as a "leadership vacuum", and they began demanding that the senior leadership take action to resolve impediments to integration. These demands gave the senior leadership the authority they needed to move away from an essentially passive enabling role to take directive action.

Empson finds no evidence that this delayed reaction was deliberately orchestrated by the senior leadership. Instead she finds an "undirected process of integration" where the selective intervention was forced upon them by their colleagues. This contrasts with Empson's (2011) study of post-recession partner restructuring in a law firm where selective intervention was a deliberate strategy. In this case the managing and senior partner delegated responsibility for decision-making to an increasingly large group of professionals but intervened regularly when they did agree with the decisions being made. Empson argues that the combination of progressive cooption and selective intervention requires sophisticated political skills and an acute understanding of the power dynamics within the firm.

This enabling approach to leadership, accompanied by selective intervention, is consistent with Uhl-Bien, Marion, and McKelvey's (2007) concept of complexity leadership, which they argue is particularly relevant to knowledge-based organizations. They describe complexity leadership as "emergent, interactive… a complex interplay from which a collective impetus for action and change emerges" (Uhl-Bien et al. 2007: 299). Leadership activity is dispersed among networks throughout the organization and the role of the senior leader is to enable these leadership activities to emerge. Notions of "servant leadership" (Greenleaf and Spears 2002) or "empowering leadership" (Chuang et al. 2013), in which leaders are primarily motivated to provide support and encouragement for the led, also resonates with both the enabling and nurturing forms of leadership, though scholars of servant and empowering leadership sometimes overlook the strongly political dimension inherent in these leadership activities.

<H2>*Consensus-building*

It is through political interaction at the strategic level and the process of consensus-building that senior executives manifest leadership in a manner particularly characteristic of professional service firms (Broderick 2011; Denis et al. 2007; Lorsch and Tierney 2002). Lorsch and Tierney (2002) portray leadership in professional service firms as about channeling the activities of senior professionals, a potentially disparate group of individuals pursuing a pluralistic agenda, towards a common strategic goal. They term this process "achieving alignment". This perspective is consistent with the focus on consensus-building articulated within the academic literature on professional service firm governance (see Leblebeci and Sherer's chapter in this Handbook).

Perhaps the most influential of these studies is by Greenwood, Hinings, and Brown (1990) who identify and describe an organizational archetype which they call the P^2, or professional partnership. Although this study focuses on the systems, structures, and interpretive scheme which embody the traditional partnership, it does refer to leadership in passing. "Dispersed power, coupled with professionals' inclination to resist autocratic actions, and the territorial jealousies that arise in geographically dispersed firms, militates against personalized, directive leadership" (p. 736). In this context, Greenwood et al. (1990) argue, the role of senior leaders is to build consensus among their peers within the partnership. Greenwood et al. (1990: 748) emphasize that "consensual decision making does not imply an absence of strategic leadership" but that the structural and ideological context within which managing partners have to operate "constrains the style they have to adopt and the pace at which they can advance change." As Hinings, Brown and Greenwood's (1991) subsequent study of abortive change in an accounting firm demonstrates, in professional service firms the authority structure can be too fragile to deal with substantial strategic change initiatives. Hinings et al. suggest that, because of the diffuse and collegial nature of the authority

structure, "a high degree of leadership (is) required, linking the collegial authority (structure) to a vision and rationale for change" (p. 390). Their study points to the need to ensure that powerful actors are part of the implementation team and for leaders to devote considerable time to building consensus among them.

Greenwood, Hinings and Brown's study (1994) of an accounting firm merger is characterized by just such as absence of consensus-building leadership. It demonstrates how the senior leadership group struggled to impose any degree of direction; its members essentially abrogated responsibility for coordinating or directing post-merger integration. While notionally adopting an enabling approach (i.e., by not attempting to control the process they created a space for entrepreneurial colleagues to step forward), they failed fundamentally at consensus-building (i.e., so that their colleagues failed to take action in support of the initiative).

Whereas the concept of achieving alignment outlined by Lorsch and Tierney (2002) implies that professional service firm leaders should develop a strategic vision for the firm and then persuade their colleagues to adopt it, the concept of consensus-building is less directive. According to this approach, the role of the leader is to identify the collective will of the partnership and develop and pursue a strategy which is consistent with that. This creating consensus approach to leadership is implicit in Empson's (2007) study of partner dynamics which argues that the role of the managing and senior partners of the firm is to resolve the inherent tension within the partnership between the needs of the individual and the needs of the collective. Leadership in this context is about managing the delicate balance between preserving each individual partners' individualistic desire to self-actualize and the collective partnership's desire to profit maximize. The election of individuals to these roles is a

manifestation of the partnership's collective will. It is their responsibility, within the delegated authority structure of the partnership, to build the consensus they need to implement that collective will.

<H1>Leadership grounded in personal embodiment

In pluralistic settings such as professional service firms there may be a tendency towards fragmenting interests among autonomous professionals. In this context individuals may acquire considerable influence by embodying overarching values with which organization members can positively identify (Denis et al. 2007; Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Thompson 1967). We highlight this resource for influencing under the category of *personal embodiment* of organizational values and identity. At the individual/group level this may take the form of *role-modeling*, where leaders exercise influence by explicating and embodying the beliefs and behaviors required of a partner and leader in a professional service firm (DeLong et al. 2007). At the organizational level, personal embodiment can represent a resource for influencing through the *management of meaning.* Leaders shape the organizational identity and provide professionals with an organizationally sanctioned vocabulary of motives (Alvesson and Willmott 2002), thus enabling them to exercise a degree of informal control over autonomous professionals. At a strategic level, certain leaders may exercise influence through their personal embodiment of the organization's strategic objectives, i.e., *visioning* (Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991).

<H2>*Role-modeling*

Role-modeling is a manifestation of leadership at the individual level whereby individuals influence their professional colleagues by "being" a personal embodiment of what is expected

of professionals, rather than by "having" professional expertise (coaching), or by "doing" political interaction (nurturing). Role-modeling is fundamentally concerned with identity, and can represent an implicit form of identity regulation (Alvesson and Willmott 2002). As Alvesson, Karreman and Sullivan demonstrate elsewhere in this Handbook, the interaction of high levels of ambiguity and insecurity in professional service firms causes them to become "identity-intensive" environments. As Ibarra (1999) recognizes, young professionals prepare themselves for partnership by observing their successful senior colleagues intimately and experimenting with provisional professional selves. When senior professionals deliberately use these role-modeling behaviors in an attempt to shape the beliefs and values of their colleagues, the emphasis shifts from informal identity development to more systematic identity regulation. Being seen as a role model within a professional service firm confers power on a professional among their peers.

Lorsch and Tierney (2002) emphasize that senior leaders of professional service firms require personal credibility to influence their star performers as well as their more junior colleagues. They argue that, in the absence of formal power, leaders of professional service firms rely upon informal power derived from simply being better than most of their colleagues at performing their professional work. Similarly, DeLong et al. (2007: 38) emphasize what they call "personal example" as the cornerstone of their proposed "integrated leadership model" for professional service firms, referring to qualities such as "unswerving commitment to market leadership, demonstrating passion and belief, treating everyone with dignity and respect, demonstrating the highest integrity, giving credit to others and taking responsibility for failure" as elements contributing to influence through inspiration. The concept of leadership as role modeling is observed empirically in Muhr's (2011) study of two professionals in leadership roles in their organizations. Muhr draws on the metaphor of the

leader as a "cyborg" and highlights the influence of leaders with "exceptional work capacity … almost inhuman in (their) extraordinary accomplishments." (p. 142). These individuals set an example to their teams through tireless energy, performing their professional work to an exemplary standard. The cyborg professional service firm leader is "rational, calculative, competitive, and focused" (p. 138), with an unshakeable confidence in their ability so that they "appear almost mechanistic and robot-like" (p. 138). While they set exceptionally demanding standards for the professionals who work with them, they attract a considerable following within their firms. This may be in part be due to their success at winning new business which enables them to "feed" their followers with work, but may also be because they inspire confidence and create a focus that helps their followers to perform better.

Professionals' attachment to what could be perceived as unrealistically demanding managers, rather than admirable role model leaders, needs to be understood in the context of the insecure environment in which they work. It can be inferred that, in professional service firms, where professionals must accommodate high levels of ambiguity (Alvesson 1993) and compete in an up-or-out tournament (Anderson-Gough et al. 1998), individuals will be drawn to leaders who can protect them by keeping them in work, inspire them by setting demanding goals, and reassure them by giving them the confidence to believe they can achieve these goals.

<H2>*Meaning making*

In the context described above, the role of leadership at the organizational level is more akin to the management of meaning described by Smircich and Morgan (1982: 258). This approach suggests that leaders may attempt to "frame and define the reality" of their fellow partners, seeking to forge a unified pattern of meaning which may provide a point of

reference against which a "*feeling* of organization and direction can emerge" (emphasis added). The importance of culture, and the role of leaders in sustaining it through the management of meaning, is explicit in much of the practitioner literature on professional service firms. For example, Broderick (2011: 24-28) identifies several tactics professional service firm leaders claim to use to "embed values and culture" including "telling the firm's story" through orientation programs and videos, mixing people on teams, and engaging in retreats and other rituals that rehearse and reaffirm company values.

The role of leadership in managing meaning is also revealed in more academic (and sometimes critically oriented) empirical studies. For example, in their account of power relations in an architectural firm, Brown et al. (2010: 534) describe how the directors framed work as democratic and open, with a distinctive emergent design philosophy, though most creative work was in fact performed by the senior architects. The emphasis on creativity and belief in a noble and superior mission had a powerful motivating effect on employees, even when they were required to perform mundane technical work. As Brown et al. (2010: 537) report, "Many people said that they 'work 80, 90 hour weeks a lot of the time', but did so 'quite happily' . . . because they felt pride in being part of a high-performing team that made them . . . feel 'like a unified force'". Robertson and colleagues (Robertson and Swan 2003; Robertson et al. 2003) provide similar accounts of how professional service firms were able to gain commitment from employees by maintaining ambiguity about consulting roles while offering a "corporate identity premised on 'elitism'" (Robertson and Swan 2003: 831). This rhetoric of elitism was promulgated and perpetuated by the senior leadership group.

The role of meaning-making is also addressed by Lawrence et al.'s (2012) study of three law firms undergoing change towards more corporate structures. The authors showed that the new

management systems tended not be institutionalized within the fabric of the firm unless the systems were "legitimated by key actors through the skilled use of language to create supportive frames for interpreting their value in the day-to-day working of the firm" (Lawrence et al. 2012: 133). Moreover, leaders were more effective in initiating radical change when they drew on more centralized authority structures that were seen as legitimate with respect to "traditional values" (Lawrence et al. 2012: 134) — in other words, when these particular leaders embodied qualities that were valued by the firm, such as their commercial reputation and professional competence, and embedded the attempts at change in participative and collegial processes.

Finally, linking with the previous notion of "covert leadership," e Cunha (2002: 493) describes a successful information technology services firm as having a "low-profile leadership style" in association with "high-profile culture". "Organizational culture, by emphasizing initiative and loyalty, substitutes the leader's role. Low-profile leaders, in turn, make the organizational culture more salient and provide personal support and opportunities for sense making" (e Cunha (2002: 493).

<H2>*Visioning*

As the final manifestation of leadership in our conceptual framework, we come to personal embodiment at a strategic level, whereby senior professionals articulate and enact their vision for the firm. Mintzberg (1979) refers to strategy in a professional settings as emergent, composed essentially of the cumulative autonomous decisions made by its operating professionals. The creation of an overarching and integrative strategic direction or "vision" does not seem likely at first sight. If it exists, it will tend to be a flexible negotiated consensus, constructed through political processes (Greenwood et al. 1990). And yet, as

Thompson (1967) notes, lack of clarity about goals and diffuse power within an organization can create a sense of fragmentation and even "anomie" — leaving room, especially in times of crisis and dispute, for the emergence of "charisma". This can be viewed as leadership which bridges differences and mobilizes energy, projecting an overarching strategic vision that reaches beyond a simple amalgam of current emergent orientations, and imbued with values to which others may be drawn. This visioning is in fact an extension of the meaning-making role from sustaining an existing culture at the organizational level to redirecting the firm at a strategic level.

The literature provides a number of examples of strategic leadership as visioning in professional service contexts that illustrate its potential and limitations. For instance, Carlsen (2006) describes how a new leader arriving in a failing technology consulting firm managed to identify a potential strategic niche that had some initial successes, and then engaged in what Carlsen calls "imagination by dramatizing", building commitment and enthusiasm among employees through "evangelist visioning" that involved the "celebration of proprietary frameworks and concepts" and the use of metaphor to describe the firm. Similarly, Gioia and Chittipeddi (1991) describe the efforts by a new principle in a university to develop a new vision and strategic plan whose central metaphor involved becoming a "top ten university." Similarly, while not strictly in a professional service firm context but certainly in a knowledge intensive setting, Abdallah and Langley (2013) describe how a new top manager in an arts organization was able to re-energize a demoralized workforce through the development of a vision that drew strongly on the organization's foundational values associated with social engagement and innovation, and offered hope for the future.

The incidents of visioning in these examples have a number of elements in common. First the strategic visions were mobilizing in part because they drew on a foundation of common values, promoted excellence and promised success, with potential to enhance the identity of those who might be associated with them. Second, they were generated by individuals whose credibility and reputation tended to be well-established — these leaders embodied the values they were promoting (Abdallah and Langley 2013; Lawrence et al. 2012). Third, while visions were clearly leader-driven, they passed through processes of back and forth consultation and consensus-building before acquiring certain legitimacy (Abdallah and Langley 2013; Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Lawrence et al. 2012).Visions generated in this manner are often characterized by ambiguity. Gioia et al. (2012) laud the "virtues of vagueness" in such settings, arguing that it is ambiguity that enables people to buy into proposed strategic directions while providing multiple ways to interpret them, thus leaving opportunities for creativity and autonomy (see also Gioia and Chittipeddi 1991; Robertson and Swan 2003; Sillince et al. 2012). Abdallah and Langley (2013) underline, however, the double-edged nature of ambiguity. They argue that, while ambiguous visions can initially enable mobilization, the multiplicity of initiatives they accommodate, combined with the potential for contradiction, can ultimately generate incoherence, overstretching and disillusion.

Leadership in the form of strategic visioning in professional service firms is thus likely to be a sporadic and fragile enterprise. It may be needed to bridge diversity and generate some form of coherence where this seems to be absent. However, such visions are likely to be fluid, value-based and ambiguous, designed to accommodate multiple possibilities and ad hoc initiatives of star professionals, rather than being sharp, clean and exclusionary as described

by Broderick (2011: 18), "a somewhat vague destination that (professional service firm leaders) continually strive for but, in fact, never really achieve".

<H1>Bringing it all together: Leadership in the plural

An overworked cliché about leadership and management in professional service firms is that it is like "herding cats" (von Nordenflycht 2010). As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, professionals tend to expect (and even need) autonomy to accomplish their work at and therefore resist forms of management authority. As we have also shown, however, there are a variety of alternative resources and mechanisms by which professionals can lead and influence others. These may be grounded in professional expertise, political interaction and personal embodiment. Professional service firms may not have the formalized command and control hierarchies found in other types of organizations, but they do have explicit and implicit meritocratic hierarchies in which seniority and professional expertise constitute bases for influence (Brown et al. 2010; Diefenbach and Sillince 2011), and are manifested in leadership practices such as one-to-one coaching at the individual level, balancing the economic and organizational structures at the firm level, and championing entrepreneurial activity at the strategic level. Moreover the distributed nature of authority ensures that professional service firms are fertile environments for political forms of leadership that may involve nurturing, enabling, and consensus-building through the development of coalitions. Finally, the fragmentation and individualism of professional services may be overcome to a degree through the personal embodiment of value-based leadership, where individuals acquire influence not by giving orders but by exemplifying valued behavior (role-modeling), through meaning-making that sustains a valued firm identity, and by offering inspirational visions that are broad enough to bridge divergent perspectives.

Yet, while leadership in professional service firms appears clearly in multiple forms of behavior, it seems unlikely that all of these behaviors will be manifested by a single individual, whatever their position in the firm. Leadership in professional service firms (at least those of any size) is necessarily distributed. Moreover, because of their fluid power dynamics, integrated direction seems unlikely to develop unless multiple individuals coalesce to form a coalition combining professional expertise and political skill, and who are also able to personally embody values. Effective strategic leadership in professional organizations is therefore typically a *collective* endeavor (Currie and Lockett 2011; Denis et al. 2010; Denis et al. 2012; Empson et al. 2013; Fitzgerald et al. 2013; Greenwood et al. 1990; Reid and Karambayya 2009) in which different individuals may play different roles.

To the extent that leadership roles among individuals are specialized, differentiated and complementary (i.e., fit together and cover the full range of issues), it may be possible to speak of a "leadership constellation" that effectively drives the direction of the firm (Denis et al. 2001; Denis et al. 2012; Hodgson et al. 1965). Indeed, several authors have noted how knowledge-based organizations often have formally defined pooled leadership at the top (e.g., dyads or triads of leaders working in concert), as in the case of senior and managing partners in law firms (Empson and Chapman 2006; Empson 2007, 2012), professional/ managerial hybrids in health care (Fitzgerald et al. 2013), administrative and artistic directors in the performing arts (Reid and Karambayya 2009) and co-leadership among high technology ventures (Google, Research in Motion), as well as financial service firms such as Goldman-Sachs (Alvarez and Svejenova 2005).

Beyond notions of pooled leadership at the top (Denis et al. 2012), leadership influence is also likely to be "distributed" throughout levels and areas within the firm. This is manifested

for example in the ability of professionals to champion new entrepreneurial initiatives based on their specific areas of expertise, as well as the propensity for professional service firms to rely on teamwork in which leadership is typically distributed to those who have the most valuable expertise relating to a particular project (Gardner et al. 2012).

In summary, rather than being absent as Alvesson and Sveningsson (2003) suggest, we argue that *in professional service firms, leadership is potentially everywhere*. The challenge appears to lie in rendering it coherent and sustainable in situations of diffuse power where people are often elected to leadership positions by their peers. Yet, many firms appear to have achieved coherent and effective leadership over time, with some growing to giant organizations operating in multiple countries. This suggests that professional service firms hold valuable lessons for other kinds of organizations struggling to adopt more plural forms of leadership (Denis et al. 2012), in areas such as education (Gronn 1999), healthcare (Denis et al. 2001), and in knowledge based organizations more generally (Uhl-Bien et al. 2007). It is tempting to conclude from the preceding discussion that leadership in professional service firms is infinitely complex, representing distinctive and sometimes perhaps even insurmountable challenges. As stated earlier, however, Alvesson (2004: 137) argues that "leadership is probably a less important aspect of (professional service firms) than of many other organizations".

How can these apparently opposing perspectives on professional service firm leadership be reconciled? The key may be to recognize the presence of an additional, disembodied, player in the complex power dynamics within professional service firms, the extensive social control systems, which serves as a "substitute" for leadership (Gronn 1999; Kerr and Jermier 1978) or, put differently, contributes to leadership plurality (Spillane 2006). It is this aspect of

leadership in professional service firms which perhaps holds the greatest potential for insights into plural leadership in organizations more generally.

Leaders may struggle to exert influence and to knit together an apparently disparate group of self-directed and highly autonomous professionals but they have a powerful ally: *the extensive social control systems which are deeply embedded within professional service firms,* from the elaborate and protracted selection and promotion processes, to the less formalized but equally powerful socialization processes and all-pervasive practices of peer control. Taken together, these constitute an elaborate system of control which preserves the perception among professionals that they are acting autonomously while in fact ensuring a high degree of compliance (Empson and Jonsson 2013). As an accounting firm partner in Empson's (2004: 767) study put it: "I do what I want, but the things I want are likely to help the firm because that is the way I have been trained. At one level we (partners) are completely independent, but we all march to the same tune without even thinking about it." Such a statement clearly nuances considerably the simplistic assertion that leadership in a professional service firm is like "herding cats". Instead it suggests that a key role for leaders in a professional service firm is to assist their professional peers in constructing, reproducing and adapting their own collective "iron cages" (Barker 1993; DiMaggio and Powell 1983) that mutually orient behaviour in subtle but important ways. This insight potentially applies to plural leadership of any organizational of highly skilled knowledge workers, not just professional service firms.

<H1>Conclusions: Towards a refined conception of leadership in professional service firms

We began this chapter by adopting Yukl's classic and all-encompassing definition of leadership as: "influencing task objectives and strategies, influencing commitment and compliance in task behavior to achieve these objectives, influencing group maintenance and identification, and influencing the culture of an organization" (Yukl 1989: 253). We were conscious of Fenton and Pettigrew's (2006: 102) assertion that, in the context of professional service firms, "there is not much to be gained from taking existing theories of leadership as a lens for interpretation." Through our analysis and synthesis of a broad range of studies with implications for leadership in professional contexts, we have developed a more nuanced, detailed, and context-specific definition of leadership in professional service firms.

We argue that leadership in professional service firms is, above all, *a process of interaction* among professionals seeking to influence each other. It is *manifested explicitly through professional expertise*, *discretely through political interaction,* and *implicitly through personal embodiment*. These influencing processes simultaneously encompass multiple foci, from the individual and group, to the organizational and strategic. Each are of equal significance since, ultimately in a professional service firm, strategy can only be realized in the actions and interactions of individual professionals.

We have identified nine distinctive manifestations of leadership in this context and argue that an effective leader in a professional service firm is one who is able to *understand and navigate the complex power dynamics among senior professionals and to encompass multiple manifestations of leadership*: from coaching to consensus-building, from championing to meaning-making, from nurturing to visioning, from balancing to enabling and role-modeling.

Because individual professionals may struggle to manifest these multiple behaviors, leadership in professional service firms is often more effectively carried out by a plural leadership group, or leadership constellation.

Looking to the future, since so little systematic, focused empirical research has been conducted into leadership in professional service firms, the field is "wide open" to future opportunities for contribution. Below we highlight various topics that build on the conceptualization developed here and that merit further research attention. The preceding analysis has sought to knit together an extensive yet fragmented set of studies to develop a coherent overview of leadership in professional service firms. Yet this approach inevitably imposes an erroneous impression of homogeneity. There is of course considerable variation within the professional services sector and this potentially has significant implications for leadership and leadership research. One significant source of heterogeneity is the life stage of the professional service firm (Empson 2012). For example, how does leadership in founder-managed firms vary from that in more established professional service firms? How might leadership practices in these firms evolve as the firm grows and develops (e.g. from more emphasis on personal embodiment initially towards more political and bureaucratic processes later)? As firms grow, does the importance of leadership become less or more significant? How do the power dynamics of leaders in relation to their professional colleagues change as a professional partnership becomes a publicly owned corporation?

Another significant source of heterogeneity is the type of business in which a professional service firm is engaged. Previous studies have suggested that there is a consistent set of individual-level characteristics common across all professions (Von Glinow 1988). Even if this is the case, there is considerable variation in the kind of work professionals do and the

organizational and regulatory context in which they do it (Brock et al. 1999; Malhotra and Morris 2009; von Nordenflycht 2010). The preceding analysis has brought together studies of the established traditional professionals (e.g. accountants and lawyers) with more creative regulated professionals (e.g. architects and engineers) with aspirant professionals (e.g. management and technology consultants), and public sector professionals (e.g. healthcare workers and academics). We have identified some consistent leadership themes across these contexts but we can infer that there is also likely to be considerable divergence, associated with different patterns of socialization, different ownership structure, and the varying significance of professional and state regulation.

Given the dearth of research and the significance of the professional service sector to the global economy, leadership in professional service firms is worth studying in its own right. But research in such a context also has the potential to make important contribution to organizational theory more generally, particularly around the themes of power and politics. Denis et al.'s (2012) examination of leadership in the plural highlighted the neglect of discussions of power within this literature. A study of leadership in professional service firms, which is most typically "plural", is a fertile context in which to explore the theme of power and power dynamics more fully. For example, there is much to be learnt about the power dynamics within the leadership dyad of senior and managing partner and how this dyad engages with the powerful "barons" who serve as practice leaders, and "rainmakers" within the firm. Empson et al. (2013) have highlighted the increasing significance of management professionals (with functional expertise but not professional expertise) in these firms. How can they establish the authority they require to lead without the requisite professional expertise which the fee-earning professionals require of their leaders? How are they able to personally embody the firm when they themselves are not a product of it? It can

be inferred that they must rely predominately on political skill but, if so, how do they develop and deploy these skills in the distinctive context of the professional service firm?

And how do the power dynamics of an extended leadership group shift in response to external and internal disruption? For example, what is the impact of contested leadership elections on carefully constructed coalitions among professional peers? And under conditions of crisis, are leaders of professional service firms able to assume a greater degree of power vis-à-vis their professional colleagues? Would crisis conditions lead to a fundamental and lasting shift in the nature of power relations between leaders and their professional colleagues, or must leaders revert to their protracted political processes of influencing and coalitional building once these conditions are past?

As stated at the start of this chapter, scholars of professional service firms have generally neglected the theme of leadership, focusing their analysis at the level of the organization and individual professional but neglecting the role of leadership in integrating individual actions with organizational intentions. Similarly, professional service firms have received very little direct attention from leadership scholars. Yet professional service firms can be seen as pioneering organizational responses to leadership challenges which are becoming increasingly relevant to organisations more generally within the knowledge economy — specifically how to persuade highly educated, relatively autonomous knowledge workers to work collaboratively to serve the needs of the organization. Professional service firms have therefore grappled with, and to a significant extent resolved, one of the most challenging power dynamics at the heart of contemporary organisational life (Clegg et al. 2006). Heckscher and Adler (2006) have gone so far as to suggest that organizations of professionals are pioneering a new organizational form, the collaborative community, where the apparently

oppositional organizing principles of market, hierarchy, and community, are reconciled and accommodated in a dynamic tension which reconciles the competing values of individualism and collectivism. If this is indeed the case, it implies a significant role for leadership, in exercising influence at the individual, organizational, and strategic level. Yet, Heckscher and Adler are silent on the topic of leadership in this context.

It is time, therefore, for scholars of leadership *and* professional service firms to turn their attention to leadership *in* professional service firms, to develop a deeper understanding of this significant but neglected phenomenon.

Acknowledgements

Some of the ideas outlined in this chapter were developed as part of work funded by the UK's Economic and Social Research Council through grant RES-062-23-2269, "Understanding the dynamics of leadership in professional service firms".

References

Abdallah, C., and Langley, A. (2013). "The Double Edge of Ambiguity in Strategic Planning," *Journal of Management Studies*, (forthcoming).

Adler, P. S., Kwon, S. W., and Heckscher, C. (2008). "Perspective—Professional Work: The Emergence of Collaborative Community," *Organization Science*, 19(2): 359–76.

Alvarez, J. L., and Svejenova, S. (2005). *Sharing Executive Power: Roles and Relationships at the Top*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Alvesson, M., and Spicer, A. (2011). *Metaphors We Lead By: Leadership in the Real World*. London, UK: Routledge.

Alvesson, M. (1993). "Organizations as Rhetoric: Knowledge-Intensive Firms and the Struggle with Ambiguity," *Journal of Management Studies*, 30(6): 997–1015.

Alvesson, M. (2004). *Knowledge Work and Knowledge-Intensive Firms*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Alvesson, M., and Willmott, H. (2002). "Identity Regulation as Organizational Control: Producing the Appropriate Individual," *Journal of Management Studies*, 39(5): 619–44.

Alvesson, M., and Sveningsson, S. (2003a). "The Great Disappearing Act: Difficulties in Doing 'Leadership'", *Leadership Quarterly*, 14(3): 359–81.

Alvesson, M., and Sveningsson, S. (2003b). "Managers Doing Leadership: the Extra-Ordinarization of the Mundane," *Human Relations*, 56(12): 1435–59.

Alvesson, M., and Sveningsson, S. (2003c). "Good Visions, Bad Micro-Management and Ugly Ambiguity: Contradictions of (non-) Leadership in a Knowledge-Intensive Organization," *Organization Studies*, 24(6): 961–88.

Anand, N., Gardner, H. K., and Morris, T. (2007). "Knowledge-based Innovation: Emergence and Embedding of New Practice Areas in Management Consulting Firms," *Academy of Management Journal*, 50(2): 406–28.

Anderson-Gough, F., Grey, C., and Robson, K. (1998). "Work Hard, Play Hard': An Analysis of Organizational Cliche in Two Accountancy Practices," *Organization,* 5(4): 565–92.

Anderson-Gough, F., Grey, C., and Robson, K. (2000). "In the Name of the Client: The Service Ethic in Two Professional Services Firms," *Human Relations,* 53(9): 1151–74.

Anderson-Gough, F., Grey, C., and Robson, K. (2001). "Tests of Time: Organizational Time-Reckoning and the Making of Accountants in Two Multi-national Accounting Firms," *Accounting, Organizations and Society,* 26(2): 99–122.

Anderson-Gough, F., Grey, C., and Robson, K. (2002). "Accounting Professionals and the Accounting Profession: linking conduct and context," *Accounting and Business Research,* 32(1): 41–56.

Avolio, B. J., Walumbwa, F. O., and Weber, T. J. (2009). "Leadership: Current theories, research, and future directions," *Annual Review of Psychology,* 60: 421–49.

Barker, J. R. (1993). "Tightening the Iron Cage: Concertive Control in Self-managing Teams," *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 408–37.

Barker, R. A. (1997). "How can we Train Leaders if we do not Know what Leadership Is?," *Human Relations,* 50(4): 343–62.

Brock, D., et al. (1999). "The Restructured Professional Organisation: Corporates, Cobwebs and Cowboys," in D. Brock, M. J. Powell, M. Powell, and C. R. Hinings (eds), *Restructuring the Professional Organization: Accounting, Health Care and Law*. London, UK: Routledge, 215–29.

Broderick, M. (2011). *The Art of Managing Professional Services: Insights from Leaders of the World's Top Firms.* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Brown, A. D., Kornberger, M., Clegg, S. R., and Carter, C. (2010). "'Invisible Walls' and 'Silent Hierarchies': A case study of power relations in an architecture firm," *Human Relations,* 63(4): 525–49.

Carlsen, A. (2006). "Organizational Becoming as Dialogic Imagination of Practice: The case of the Indomitable Gauls," *Organization Science,* 17(1): 132–49.

Chuang, C. H., Jackson, S. E., and Jiang, Y. (2013). "Can Knowledge-Intensive Teamwork Be Managed? Examining the Roles of HRM Systems, Leadership, and Tacit Knowledge," *Journal of Management,* (forthcoming).

Clegg, S. R., Courpasson, D., and Phillips, N. (2006). *Power and Organizations. Foundations for Organizational Science.* London, Thousand Oaks CA, New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Cohen, M. D., and March, J. G. (1986). *Leadership and Ambiguity: The American College President.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Currie, G., and Lockett, A. (2011). "Distributing Leadership in Health and Social Care: Concertive, Conjoint or Collective?," *International Journal of Management Reviews,* 13(3): 286–300.

DeLong, T. J., Gabarro, J. J., and Lees, R. J. (2007). *When Professionals Have to Lead: A New Model for High Performance.* Cambridge. MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Denis, J., Langley, A., and Rouleau, L. (2007). "Strategizing in Pluralistic Contexts: Rethinking Theoretical Frames," *Human Relations,* 60(1): 179.

Denis, J. L., Langley, A., and Cazale, L. (1996). "Leadership and Strategic Change Under Ambiguity," *Organization Studies,* 17(4): 673–99.

Denis, J. L., Lamothe, L., and Langley, A. (2001). "The Dynamics of Collective Leadership and Strategic Change in Pluralistic Organizations," *Academy of Management Journal,* 44(4): 809–37.

Denis, J. L., Langley, A., and Rouleau, L. (2010). "The Practice of Leadership in the Messy World of Organizations," *Leadership,* 6(1): 67–88.

Denis, J. L., Langley, A., and Sergi, V. (2012). "Leadership in the Plural," *Academy of Management Annals,* 6(1): 211–83.

Diefenbach, T., and Sillince, J. A. A. (2011). "Formal and Informal Hierarchy in Different Types of Organization," *Organization Studies*, 32(11): 1515–37.

DiMaggio, P. J., and Powell, W. W. (1983). "The Iron Cage Revisited: Institutional Isomorphism and Collective Rationality in Organizational Fields," *American Sociological Review*, 147–60.

e Cunha, M. P. (2002). "'The Best Place to Be:' Managing Control and Employee Loyalty in a Knowledge-Intensive Company," *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 38(4): 481–95.

Empson, L. (2000). "Merging Professional Service Firms," *Business Strategy Review*, 11(2): 39–46.

Empson, L. (2001a). "Fear of Exploitation and Fear of Contamination: Impediments to Knowledge Transfer in Mergers Between Professional Service Firms," *Human Relations*, 54(7): 839–62.

Empson, L. (2001b). "Introduction: Knowledge Management in Professional Service Firms," *Human Relations*, 54(7): 811–17.

Empson, L. (2004). "Organizational Identity Change: Managerial Regulation and Member Identification in an Accounting Firm Acquisition," *Accounting, Organizations and Society*, 29(8): 759–81.

Empson, L. (2007). *Managing the Modern Law Firm: New Challenges, New Perspectives.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Empson, L. (2011). "Navigating Ambiguity: Collective Leadership Processes in Professional Service Firms," *Academy of Management Annual Meeting* (San Antonio, Texas).

Empson, L. (2012). "Beyond Dichotomies: A Multi-Stage Model of Governance in Professional Service Firms," in M. R. Reihlen and A. Werr (eds), *Handbook of Research on Entrepreneurship in Professional Services.* Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 274–96.

Empson, L., and Chapman, C. (2006). "Partnership Versus Corporation: Implications of Alternative Forms of Governance in Professional Service Firms," *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, 24: 139–70.

Empson, L., and Jonsson, A. (July 2013). "Cult(ures) in Collaborative Communities: Reconciling the Logics of Autonomy and Control in Elite Professional Service Firms," (EGOS Colloquium, Montreal)

Empson, L., Cleaver, I., and Allen, J. (2013). "Managing Partners and Management Professionals: Institutional Work Dyads in Professional Partnerships," *Journal of Management Studies*, (forthcoming).

Faulconbridge, J. R. (2006). "Stretching Tacit Knowledge Beyond a Local Fix? Global Spaces of Learning in Advertising Professional Service Firms," *Journal of Economic Geography*, 6(4): 517–40.

Fenton, E. and Pettigrew, A. (2006). "Leading Change in the New Professional Service Firm: Characterizing Strategic Leadership in a Global Context," *Research in the Sociology of Organizations*, 24: 101–37.

Fitzgerald, L., Ferlie, E., McGivern, G., and Buchanan, D. (2013). "Distributed Leadership Patterns and Service Improvement: Evidence and Argument from English Healthcare," *The Leadership Quarterly*, 24: 227–39.

Gardner, H. K., Anand, N., and Morris, T. (2008). "Chartering New Territory: Diversification, Legitimacy, and Practice Area Creation in Professional Service Firms," *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 29(8): 1101–21.

Gardner, H. K., Gino, F., and Staats, B.R. (2012). "Dynamically Integrating Knowledge in Teams: Transforming Resources into Performance," *Academy of Management Journal*, 55(4): 998–1022.

Gioia, D. A., and Chittipeddi, K. (1991). "Sensemaking and Sensegiving in Strategic Change Initiation," *Strategic Management Journal,* 12(6): 433–48.

Gioia, D. A., Nag, R., and Corley, K. G., (2012). "Visionary Ambiguity and Strategic Change The Virtue of Vagueness in Launching Major Organizational Change," *Journal of Management Inquiry,* 21(4): 364–75.

Greenleaf, R. K., and Spears, L. C. (2002). *Servant Leadership: A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness.* Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press.

Greenwood, R., and Empson, L. (2003). "The Professional Partnership: Relic or Exemplary form of Governance?," *Organization Studies,* 24(6): 909–33.

Greenwood, R., Hinings, C. R., and Brown, J. (1990). "'P 2-Form' Strategic Management: Corporate Practices in Professional Partnerships," *Academy of Management Journal,* 33(4): 725–55.

Greenwood, R., Hinings, C. R., and Brown, J. (1994). "Merging Professional Service Firms," *Organization Science,* 5(2): 239–57.

Gronn, P. (1999). "Substituting for Leadership: The Neglected Role of the Leadership Couple," *Leadership Quarterly,* 10(1): 41–62.

Heckscher, C., and Adler, P. S., (2006). *The Firm as a Collaborative Community: Reconstructing Trust in the Knowledge Economy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hinings, C. R., Brown, J., and Greenwood, R. (1991). "Change in an Autonomous Professonal Organization," *Journal of Management Studies,* 28(4): 376–393.

Heusinkveld, S., and Benders, J. (2005). "Contested Commodification: Consultancies and their Struggle with New Concept Development," *Human relations,* 58(3): 283–310.

Hodgson, R. C., Levinson, D. J., and Zaleznik, A. (1965). *The Executive Role Constellation.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Howell, J. M., and Shamir, B. (2005). "The Role of Followers in the Charismatic Leadership Process: Relationships and Their Consequences," *Academy of Management Review,* 30(1): 96–112.

Ibarra, H. (1999). "Provisional Selves: Experimenting with Image and Identity in Professional Adaptation," *Administrative Science Quarterly,* 44(4): 764–91.

Kerr, S., and Jermier, J. M., (1978). "Substitutes for Leadership: Their Meaning and Measurement," *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance,* 22(3): 375–403.

Kiechel, W. (2010). *Lords of Strategy.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Lawrence, T. B., Malhotra, N., and Morris, T. (2012). "Episodic and Systemic Power in the Transformation of Professional Service Firms," *Journal of Management Studies,* 49(1): 102–43.

Lorsch, J. W., and Tierney, T. J. (2002). *Aligning the Stars.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Løwendahl, B. R. (2005). *Strategic Management of Professional Service Firms.* Copenhagen, Denmark: Copenhagen Business School Press.

Maister, D. H. (1981). *Balancing the Professional Service Firm.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Maister, D. H. (1993). *Managing the Professional Service Firm.* New York, NY: Free Press.

Malhotra, N., and Morris, T., (2009). "Heterogeneity in Professional Service Firms," *Journal of Management Studies,* 46(6): 895–922.

Marcson, S. (1962). "Decision-Making in a University Physics Department," *American Behavioral Scientist,* 6(4): 37–39.

Martin, G. P., Currie, G., and Finn, R. (2009). "Leadership, Service Reform, and Public-Service Networks: the Case of Cancer-Genetics Pilots in the English NHS," *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory,* 19(4): 769–94.

Miller, D., and Sardais, C. (2011). "A Concept of Leadership for Strategic Organization," *Strategic Organization*, 9(2): 174–83.

Miner, J. B., Crane, D. P., and Vandenberg, R. J. (1994). "Congruence and Fit in Professional Role Motivation Theory," *Organization Science*, 5(1): 86–97.

Mintzberg, H. (1979). *The Structuring of Organizations.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Mintzberg, H. (1983). *Power In and Around Organizations.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Mintzberg, H. (1989). *Mintzberg on Management: Inside our Strange World of Organizations.* New York, NY: Free Press.

Mintzberg, H. (1998). "Covert Leadership: Notes on Managing Professionals," *Harvard Business Review*, 76: 140–48.

Morris, T., Greenwood, R., and Fairclough, S. (2010). "Decision Making in Professional Service Firms," in P. Nutt and D. Wilson (eds), *Handbook of Decision Making*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd., 275–306.

Muhr, S. L. (2011). "The Leader as Cyborg—Norm-Setting, Intimidation and Mechanistic Superiority," in M. Alvesson, and A. Spicer (eds), *Understanding Leadership in the Real World: Metaphors We Lead By.* London: Routledge, 138–61.

O'Reilly, D., and Reed, M. (2011). "The Grit in the Oyster: Professionalism, Managerialism and Leaderism as Discourses of UK Public Services Modernization," *Organization Studies*, 32(8): 1079–1101.

Ouchi, W. G. (1980). "Markets, Bureaucracies, and Clans," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 25(1): 129–141.

Reid, W., and Karambayya, R. (2009). "Impact of Dual Executive Leadership Dynamics in Creative Organizations," *Human Relations*, 62(7): 1073–112.

Robertson, M., and Swan, J. (2003). "'Control–What Control?'Culture and Ambiguity Within a Knowledge Intensive Firm," *Journal of Management Studies,* 40(4): 831–58.

Robertson, M., Scarbrough, H., and Swan, J. (2003). "Knowledge Creation in Professional Service Firms: Institutional Effects," *Organization Studies,* 24(6): 831–57.

Scott, W. R. (2008). "Lords of the Dance: Professionals as Institutional Agents," *Organization Studies,* 29: 219–38.

Sillince, J., Jarzabkowski, P., and Shaw, D. (2012). "Shaping Strategic Action Through the Rhetorical Construction and Exploitation of Ambiguity," *Organization Science,* 23(3): 630–50.

Smircich, L., and Morgan, G. (1982). "Leadership: The Management of Meaning," *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science,* 18(3): 257–73.

Spillane, J. P. (2006). *Distributed Leadership.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Starbuck, W. H. (1993). "Keeping a Butterfly and An Elephant in a House of Cards: The Elements of Exceptional Success," *Journal of Management Studies,* 30(6): 885–921.

Strannegård, L. (2012). "Leadership in Entrepreneurial Professional Service Firms," in M.R. Reihlen, and A. Werr (eds), *Handbook of Research on Entrepreneurship in Professional Services.* Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar, 170–80.

Suddaby, R., and Viale, T. (2011). "Professionals and Field-Level Change: Institutional Work and the Professional Project," *Current Sociology,* 59(4): 423–42.

Thompson, J. D. (1967). *Organizations in Action: Social Science Bases of Administrative Theory.* New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishing.

Uhl-Bien, M., Marion, R., and McKelvey, B. (2007). "Complexity Leadership Theory: Shifting Leadership from the Industrial Age to the Knowledge Era," *Leadership Quarterly,* 18(4): 298–318.

Von Glinow, M. A. (1988). *The New Professionals: Managing Today's High-Tech Employees.* Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Company.

Von Nordenflycht, A. (2010). "What is a Professional Service Firm? Toward a Theory and Taxonomy of Knowledge-Intensive Firms," *Academy of Management Review*, 35(1): 155–74.

Werr, A., and Stjernberg, T. (2003). "Exploring Management Consulting Firms as Knowledge Systems," *Organization Studies*, 24(6): 881–908.

Yukl, G. (1989). "Managerial Leadership: A Review of Theory and Research," *Journal of Management*, 15(2): 251–89.

Table 8.1: Manifestations of leadership in Professional Service Firms

	Resources for influencing		
Mechanisms for influencing	**Professional Expertise**	**Political Interaction**	**Personal Embodiment**
Focus of influence			
Individual/ Group	Coaching	Nurturing	Role-modeling
Organizational	Balancing	Enabling	Meaning-making
Strategic	Championing	Consensus-building	Visioning