Decision-Making for Leaders
A Synthesis of Ideas from the Harvard University Advanced Leadership Initiative Think Tank
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FACULTY CHAIR, INNOVATIONS IN HEALTH CARE THINK TANK

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Preface:
The Think Tank Premise

The Advanced Leadership Initiative (ALI) at Harvard University is dedicated to educating and deploying a leadership force of experienced leaders who can address challenging national and global problems. An important part of this process is stimulating discussion among experts and advocates about the gaps that can be filled by Advanced Leaders, including the Advanced Leadership Fellows who are preparing to transition from their primary income-earning years to their next years of service. Each year, ALI convenes three solution-finding workshops called Think Tanks to delve deeply into the nature of social problems, their potential solutions, the barriers to change, and the ways Advanced Leaders can make a difference.

On March 29-31, 2012, leaders in the field of decision-making gathered with practitioners to discuss the nature of leadership decisions, especially by Advanced Leaders. The Think Tank was chaired by Peter Zimmerman, Senior Associate Dean for Strategic Program Development at the Harvard Kennedy School and a Co-Chair of the Advanced Leadership Initiative. While past Advanced Leadership Initiative Think Tanks focused on a particular social issue—education, health, climate, economic opportunity—the “Decision-Making for Leaders” Think Tank focused on decision-making as a leadership skill, an essential competency for Advanced Leaders.

Addressing an unmet social need or unsolved problem differs from assigning tasks or formulating strategies in established organizations, or exercising leadership in a domain with existing pathways and institutions. Even seemingly simple ideas for change require multiple strategies in multiple domains, taking various stakeholders into account. Advanced Leaders must work within complex and (often) poorly organized social contexts, where authority is diffused, resources are dispersed, stakeholders are diverse, and goals are vague, ambiguous, or conflicting. Forging change thus requires a special kind of leadership. When leaders lack formal authority over an unbounded system, they need to think systematically while mastering relevant subject knowledge. They must influence individuals and groups to mobilize resources and work together. They need a highly developed sense of contextual and emotional intelligence to understand stakeholder motivations and assumptions. Finally, they have to find ways to create a shared purpose and common ground to get multiple actors to move forward on an issue. Leading within such a context requires individuals to make innumerable critical strategic, organizational, and financial decisions.

With this Advanced Leadership frame in mind, roughly 100 leaders convened to discuss issues in the research and practice of decision-making and how to improve it. This report provides a narrative summary of the science and use of decision-making as discussed in this Think Tank and highlights areas in which leaders can improve upon this most essential of skills.
Advanced Leadership and Decision-Making: An Essential Skill

A core task for Advanced Leaders is how to enter complex, unbounded contexts characterized by diffused authority and dispersed resources and get multiple stakeholders with vague or conflicting goals to move forward on a social issue in which there is little or no established institutional pathway for solving the problem. It is a task infused with many complex and difficult decisions in which it is rarely clear, even after the fact, whether the correct choice was made. It is a task that requires highly developed judgment and decision-making skills.

Complex decision-making is a uniquely human capability, said Peter Zimmerman, Senior Associate Dean for Strategic Program Development at the Harvard Kennedy School and Co-Chair of the Advanced Leadership Initiative. “Rats find their way through a maze and it appears that they decide to take one route over another. Slime mold grows toward a food source and seems to exhibit intelligent behavior. My dog Daisy gets up at 5:00am every day and seems to know that it’s time for breakfast and her walk. However, these behaviors are not decisions requiring the skills that leaders exercise. They are conditioned behaviors, simple patterns of stimulus and response, emerging from evolutionary and contemporary experience, automatic in character, and, as far as we know, in no way involving conscious thought & decision.”

What distinguishes human intelligence and complex decision-making is the combination of three features:

- Like the rats and slime mold, we are able to sense changes in our environment: what is going on around us, what do we see, hear, taste, touch and smell?
- Second, we are self aware, we know what’s going on inside, our varied wants and needs; we are able to make sense of changes in the environment, what they mean for us and we have the capacity to act purposefully in response to events and actions of others. We have a sense of agency: the capacity to deliberately link our actions to intent.
- Third, we are able to imagine what others perceive and experience and, in effect, simulate their reaction(s) to changes in the environment. In so doing, unlike Daisy the dog, we can imagine futures outside our own experience; indeed, futures outside all human experience.

It is these features in combination which enable us to know our own interests, to imagine what others think and feel, and to predict how others will likely react to what we (or yet others) say and do. It is this capacity to predict the consequences of actions and events outside our own experience – a uniquely human skill that enables complex decision-making.

The traditional presentation of decision-making begins with problem definition, specification of goals, information gathering, generation and analysis of options, identification of trade-offs, prediction of outcomes with attendant risk and uncertainty, and, in the end, an act of deliberate choice. It is a well established and
valuable prescription for orderly, analytically rigorous, rational decision-making. Many public and private organizations, including most major corporations and national governments, have established systematic processes and technology to support decision-making incorporating some or all of the above elements.

Yet several decades of research in the classroom, laboratory and diverse public and private organizations paint a different picture. In many leadership situations, there may be many or too few people with authority to decide, resources may be dispersed or inadequate to needs or key figures may have conflicting or frustratingly vague goals. Incomplete information, limiting features in cognitive and affective processing, social and group influences and many other factors stand in the way of reasoned and rational choice. In political science, economics, psychology and neuroscience, researchers are coming to a rich and more textured understanding of how individuals and organizations arrive at complex decisions.

In general, we make decisions to try to move toward a better future. Yet our thinking and decision processes are not always as sound as we might imagine. All of us, even the most skilled Advanced Leaders, are subject to predictable cognitive and affective constraints and limitations which can distort and bias our judgment and decisions. But humankind has one particularly powerful and redeeming quality; through conscious deliberate examination of past experiences and imagined futures, we can learn, adapt and advance.

Humans, unlike most animals, can learn from experiences without actually having had that experience, said Daniel Gilbert, Professor of Psychology at Harvard University. Our brains are “experience-simulating machines.” We do not have to experience all the bad things to know what is good. Yet when we imagine the future, we inevitably leave out many details that matter just as much as those things we include. Furthermore, it is hard to escape the influence of how we feel in our present state, which colors what we want in the future. Therefore, our predictions are often incorrect or incomplete, which has important implications for decisions made by leaders.

Consider the decision to start a social enterprise, which, driven by the passion to solve a social problem with limited resources, faces innumerable difficult decisions.

What is the social problem one wants to address? How does one know that their intervention will address the problem? How does one identify and approach stakeholders? Where is the best strategic place to start? A demonstration project? Advocacy? Policy change? How does one start – big or small? What is the best organizational vehicle to use? If one needs to build alliances, how do they convince others to partner? If one needs to ask for resources, how do they convince others to contribute? What kind of support is needed? How does one ensure against unintended consequences or resistance? Once a strategy is defined and a vehicle is selected, the organization or initiative will inevitably need to evolve, requiring Advanced Leaders – whether individually or as part of a formal or informal group – to continually revisit decisions. Social entrepreneurs confront these decisions by making the best assessments and predictions they can. Furthermore, these decisions must be made in real-time, under time-constraints and with limited information. If decision-making is a science, judgment is an art.

Over three days, researchers and practitioners reflected on the nature of this process and what was needed to improve upon the skill. The Think Tank began with researchers introducing findings from the science of decision-making with a focus on the individual psychology of decision-making based on experimentation – whether in the lab or the field. The event then transitioned to practitioners, students of practitioners, and researchers turned practitioners reflecting on the nature of decision-making, with a focus on real world decisions made within groups or organizations. The gathering then concluded with Think Tank participants breaking into groups to reflect on decisions they have made during their own careers and consider how to approach decision-making in the future. The Think Tank focused initially on the science of decision-making, examined the practice of it before assessing past experiences and how to improve the Advanced Leadership Fellows’ own use of this critical leadership skill.
The Science of Decision-Making: Implications for Leaders

The textbooks tell us that decisions may be broken into parts – define the problem, specify the objective, gather data, generate alternatives, weigh the risks and uncertainty, identify the trade-offs, consider consequences, and select the optimal choice. But that is not how we really make decisions – whether as individuals or in groups. “Most of the time we do not follow a rational model,” said Peter Zimmerman.

DECISIONS BY INDIVIDUALS

Most individual decisions reflect our bounded rationality. Natural cognitive limits often exacerbated by time limits and intense pressures affect how well we define the problem, specify goals, gather data, think about alternatives, understand risk, consider trade-offs, and assess consequences – all before making a decision to, for example, start a social enterprise or implement a national economic policy or respond to the building of a nuclear weapon.

But our decisions are also bounded in other ways. We make decisions when the need occurs, experience and training shape our perceptions, our emotional states frame our interpretations, and context influences our interpretations, attributions, and predictions. Zimmerman quoted John F. Kennedy: “The essence of ultimate decision remains impenetrable to the observer – often, indeed, to the decider himself.” In reality, two psychological systems are at play — conscious, deliberate cognition and unconscious, intuitive reasoning. Or in more colloquial terms, we use not only the brain but also our gut, Zimmerman explained.

Consider the effects of emotion, willpower and ethics.

The Truth about Emotions

People make many false assumptions about the effect of emotions on decision-making, argued Jennifer Lerner, Professor of Public Policy and Management at Harvard Kennedy School. Many think, in varying degrees, that emotions and decision-making cannot be studied scientifically, that they are the fictional causes of behavior and can degrade decision-making, that humans can effectively suppress emotions, that negative moods lead to pessimistic perceptions while positive moods lead to optimistic perceptions, and that the human brain must think in order to feel. But none of these statements are true, Lerner said.

For much of the 20th Century the “science” of emotion was in the dark ages, Lerner explained. Charles Darwin’s book on the topic was not available in bookstores and the subject was often grouped under philosophy. This changed when landmark research extended Darwin’s original insights and demonstrated that facial expressions and physiological responses were nearly universal. Later researchers identified how emotions could enhance decision-making. They make people less prone to stereotypical thought and more likely to think systematically. In fact, brain damage to a section of the frontal lobe leads to riskier decisions because it hinders important bodily feedback, such as sweating. Furthermore, suppressing emotion is an ineffective, costly process that is detectable through increased muscle movements around the eyes. While we may think that our negative or positive moods color our perceptions, this is not always the case. Anger, which can be seen as a negative emotion, leads to optimism by activating thoughts of control and certainty, which changes risk perception. Anger has also been linked to areas of the brain related to the willingness to approach or attack problems. Finally, one can “feel” without necessarily “thinking.” Although emotional responses may
track via a “high road” into the cortex, the area of the brain related to higher-order cognition, such emotions as fear may also travel down a “low road” through the amygdala, thus by-passing thinking yet still influencing decisions and behavior.

**Imperfect Willpower**

Despite our best intentions, willpower is also often out of our control, said David Laibson, the Robert I. Goldman Professor of Economics at Harvard University. According to a rational model, when faced with the option of having one reward now versus a bigger reward later, we would choose the larger return. But in reality, most people systematically do the opposite — or, according to behavioral economists, we exhibit hyperbolic discounting of the future. We procrastinate, for example, or have difficulty saving.

The inability to control our will has important implications. In the area of health, we delay changing our diets or starting exercise regimes. For example, when people are asked to choose between eating fruit or chocolate over the next week, almost three-quarters choose fruit. But when they are asked to choose fruit or chocolate today, seven out of ten select chocolate. Similarly, we have trouble saving, despite our intentions. Consider the case of retirement savings accounts. “For every $1 placed in a 401(k) by a non-retiree, $0.50 comes out before retirement for education expenses, home purchases, and financial hardship.”

“Psychology matters,” Laibson said. “How are you creating tiny barriers that make all the difference in behavior?” Once we understand the barriers, we can then alter the choice architecture through the use of such interventions as commitment devices, which take advantage of our ability to think more rationally about the future rather than the present and locks people into their choices. Two examples are the creation of different savings accounts—assessing different penalties for early withdrawals—and different types of retirement accounts. Laibson asked, “Why are there 300 flavors of ice cream and only one kind of retirement savings account?”

**Bounded Ethicality**

We also have bounded ethicality or difficulty recognizing our own ethical biases as well as the unethical behavior of others, said Max Bazerman, the Jesse Isidor Straus Professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School. Bazerman and his colleagues defined bounded ethicality as “the systematic and predictable ways in which humans act unethically beyond their own awareness.”

Our own individual ethicality is constrained by our implicit attitudes and in-group/out-group biases as well as our tendency to discount the future, overclaim credit, disengage morally, and our likelihood to act more unethically under a loss than under a gain frame. Sometimes we do not even notice that we are facing an ethical decision or that we are more likely to do favors for people more like ourselves, as in the case of legacy decisions in college admissions. We also over-claim credit. When people asked how much they contributed to academic papers, the total of the group sums to well over 100 percent.

When it comes to recognizing the ethicality of others, we have motivated bounded awareness, which arises due to conflict of interest, such as when Arthur Anderson vouched for the financial health of Enron, concealing billions of dollars in debt from its shareholders. An outcome bias in judging ethics leads us to see something as more unethical after a bad event occurs. We are also susceptible to the slippery slope phenomenon or the lowered likelihood of noticing something as unethical behavior when it occurs gradually rather than all at once. Finally, we often exhibit indirect blindness in judging unethical behavior, such as when we let people off the hook when they act in a questionable manner via intermediaries.

**Decisions in Groups**

While leaders, especially of formalized organizations, are often left to make a final decision on an issue or action, the process through which they define the problem, specify the objective, gather data, generate alternatives, weigh the risks and uncertainty, identify the trade-offs, and consider consequences is mediated by group processes. A simple extension of the rational actor model assumes that groups will act much like individuals when confronted with a decision. The group or organization is little more than a black box, which could be labeled as a state, company or any other organization. The organization or the government is assumed to be unified.
The basic unit of analysis is the choice itself. The unified actors act with a shared purpose, much as the individual rational actor would, defining the problem, specifying goals, weighing options, assessing consequences, and selecting the decision which, after calculating costs and benefits, will result in selecting the action with the greatest value maximization. Graham Allison, the Director of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs and Douglas Dillon Professor of Government at the Harvard Kennedy School, added at least two alternative models which further illuminate (though do not necessarily displace) how decisions get made by aggregate or conglomerate actors: Organizational Behavior and Governmental Politics.

**Organizational Behavior**

When members of an organization consider the options before them, they must take into account its existing capabilities or “menu” of options. Organizations have routines, practices, processes, missions and cultures which condition how problems are defined, information is shared, goals are identified, options are generated and, ultimately, how decisions are made. This lends itself to trying to understand how one would need to think in the most creative and optimal manner about the decision with the available institutional arrangements. Allison likened organizational choices to that of ordering from a menu in a Chinese restaurant: “In a Chinese restaurant, one cannot ask for steak and potatoes,” Allison said. “Organizational capabilities created the opportunity to take informed decisions and also provide the system to navigate through decision-making structures,” Allison said. In sum, organizations have existing capabilities and solutions which activate routines and influence how its members understand problems, leading to the decision to generate a particular “output.”

**Governmental Politics**

Politics may also affect the decisions made by conglomerate actors and can be modeled as a legislative community. Action taken by the group — such as a government — is the result of politics. “Parties do not always agree with each other. There is also no way to force the other. Power is not completely horizontal. It is a complicated decision-making process,” Allison explained. Players occupy positions and accept certain rules of the game while multiple factors shape their perceptions and preferences. Each tries to influence others to take a desired action. In other words, individual actors with competing objectives and action channels engage in a bargaining process which generates “results.”

While all three models are pertinent for understanding group decisions, they differ in level of granularity. There is, “illumination through disaggregation,” Allison claimed. “We look and we first see a leaf. If we put this leaf under a microscope, we see chloroplast. If we can find a better resolution device, we see the grana,” he said. Likewise, the organizational behavior model opens the black box seen in the rational actor model into departments and their capabilities, while the governmental politics model further divides the departments and capabilities in the organizational behavior model into individual people with political interests. Despite the steady accumulation of insights about how individuals and groups make decisions, unanswered questions remain. How can leaders become “choice architects” or “decision engineers” within their organization or in society? Is it possible to embed accountability in decision architecture? What is the promise, if any, of improving our capacity for self-regulation by intervening biologically? What could be done to help companies improve forecasting so they can base decisions more on the future than the present? Is it possible to overcome biases by getting people to make decisions on behalf of others or would too much information be lost for making effective choices? How do decisions made by individuals differ from those made in groups? Deeper examination and reflection on leaders in action could offer clues.
The Practice of Decision-Making: Leaders In Action

Leaders do not make decisions in isolation — nor are the implications of their decisions inconsequential. Leaders make decisions with others (either for others, against others, or with others in mind) with the goal of changing that social context, ideally for the “better,” but often with the risk that their decisions may have negative effects or collateral implications. Sometimes Advanced Leaders make decisions from the top, from a position of authority, and at other times they must make choices from the bottom, with limited means for aligning goals, influencing stakeholders or marshaling resources, but with a larger social objective in mind. Decisions initiate actions.

LEADING AT THE TOP: US PRESIDENTS

Leading at the top typically implies the ability to make decisions from a position of organizational or political authority. Unlike the case of individuals choosing to diet, exercise, or save, the practice of making decisions on behalf of organizations or constituencies is not only a complicated process but final decisions are also hard to make, with direct and indirect implications for multiple stakeholders. The rational actor, organizational behavior, and government politics frameworks may all be used to understand these decision-making processes.

Decisions made by Presidents in the White House offer quintessential examples of what it is like to lead at the top, with choices ranging from economic and social policy to war and peace. Having worked in the Nixon, Ford, Reagan, and Clinton White House administrations, David Gergen, the Director of the Center for Public Leadership at the Harvard Kennedy School and a Co-Chair of the Harvard Advanced Leadership Initiative, compared decision-making in the White House to watching 11-year olds play soccer. “They all have their positions, yet they all swarm around the ball,” Gergen said. However, administrations did assume distinct styles. Elaine Kamarck, Lecturer in Public Policy at the Kennedy School who was previously in the Clinton White House, stated that its decision-making process tended toward the “unordered.” Both Clinton and Gore were also so steeped in the issues that they often knew more than the briefers. In comparison, Cheney greatly influenced the Bush/Cheney White House. He took the lead and had people placed throughout, allowing him to know what levers to pull.

The decision-making process also evolves over time, and the President and White House staff are often overwhelmed at the start, said Roger Porter, IBM Professor of Business and Government at the Harvard Kennedy School and former member of the Ford, Reagan, and Bush (Senior) White House administrations. On Obama’s second day, military commanders in Iraq told him via teleconference that their job was to make sure he did not make a mistake. Initial decisions also have longer-term consequences. “Early in the administration, mistakes in decision-making can end up being big mistakes,” Kamarck said. For example, the decision to put Hillary Clinton in charge of policy hurt the administration. People were afraid to say so, thus blocking the flow of information. In the beginning, Presidents are not sure how to handle two million government employees (more than the population of Arkansas, Kamarck reminded Clinton), but by the end of their term, they have learned how to take advantage of the bureaucracy. Permanent government employees can be a helpful resource in understanding how decisions can be implemented in reality and should be incorporated into the process upfront, Porter said.

Presidents are not experts in many areas – though they are expected to be. “I had no idea of the magnitude of issues I would be expected to decide,” said Porter, having served as Director to the White House Office of Policy Development under Reagan. The structure and specialties of advisors are critical for supporting decisions. A large part of the role of advisers is to protect their leaders. It is essential for them to anticipate issues and put in place a system that maximizes the number of issues solved without the President. Therefore, it is important to have advisors who can filter problems and present them to the President in a well-structured way, which enables informed decisions. Porter explained that
Presidents need both substantive and political advisors and each often requires different people with different backgrounds, though, “David Gergen bridged those two worlds better than anyone else.” Gergen identified three key areas for substantive decisions – strategy, people, and which way to go in a crisis. “Generally, our system works well in a crisis,” Gergen said. “But strategy is where decision-making in the presidency has struggled.” The most successful presidents helped set a strategic course that lasted across administrations. For example, Truman initiated the policy of containment. Meanwhile, it has been difficult to forge a good strategy on health care. These two instances may also reflect the differences between the decision-making processes used for domestic versus foreign issues.

**Domestic Policy**

Decisions about domestic issues are influenced by whether substantive or political advisors are closer to the President. Clinton, for example, had substantive people closer to him, while Obama was nearer to the political players. Cultural dynamics also play out in the domestic arena because the political people in the White House may have real personal bonds with the President and strong positions on domestic policy since they worked on it as staffers, said Kamarck. Porter added that staffers who come into the White House after significant involvement in campaigns often have the upper hand in decisions because of the desire to keep campaign promises.

While the state of the political system in the United States has issues, many of the problems stem less from politics and more from not properly defining the problem, a critical first step in making decisions, said Lawrence Summers, the Charles W. Eliot University Professor at Harvard University, former Secretary of the Treasury and President Emeritus of Harvard University. In the future, better decision-making processes within the U.S. political system will be needed to tackle substantive policy challenges in the domestic domains of the economy, education, and health care, each of which have international implications. The U.S. and the world continue to confront a large economic problem characterized by the lack of demand, but Summers believes it will be remembered as a cyclical fluctuation. Instead, the problem over the next 50 years is global structural change and what it means for integrating the middle class. As technology transforms manufacturing, more labor is freed and progress is unbalanced. Youths become disproportionately unemployed and wealth concentrates among fewer people, thus leaving an increasingly vulnerable middle class. Answers may be found in new educational models, a more progressive tax system, and more equal opportunity. As for the structure of the global system, Summers anticipates a more influential China and a less dominant U.S., but warned that, “the world will not be a bright place if the U.S. is not a preeminent power.”

**Foreign Policy**

Compared to the domestic arena, foreign policy has greater continuity for several reasons. The struggle between state and federal control does not exist in the area of foreign policy and Congress plays a less intrusive role in the process, commented Porter. Foreign policy is also less mentioned in the campaign so there are fewer promises to break, said Kamarck. However, this does not mean that foreign policy decisions are any less complicated or difficult.

Consider three cases of war and peace, discussed by Graham Allison – the Cuban Missile Crisis, Osama Bin Laden’s death, and Iran. In October 1962, after Kennedy found out about smuggled Soviet missiles in Cuba, he had to decide whether to attack or acquiesce and if the latter, choices were narrowed to two: airstrike or naval blockade? The blockade, in particular, was made possible by the military’s organizational capabilities, which had a protocol for implementing the option; and Kennedy, under intense time pressure, listened to advocates who argued for different options. There was uncertainty over the predicted effectiveness of an airstrike and there was little time to assess further. Kennedy opted for the blockade while the conflict was resolved via back-channel diplomacy. In November 2010, after Obama received intelligence that Osama bin Laden’s location had been identified, he had two decisions: When and how should the U.S. do something? While Bill Clinton and George W. Bush faced a similar decision, they did so with a differing menu of organizational capabilities and were not successful. When Obama considered a raid, advisors who had a negative experience trying to rescue hostages in Iran used precedence rather than a rational calculation to assess the decision. In the end, Obama defied the rules by taking extra time to make the decision. His selection of the air raid reflected more a legislative model as
the Secretary of State, Vice President, and other officials would not have made the same choice. In the face of possible Iranian acquisition of a nuclear bomb, Obama faced a decision: Should the U.S. attack Iran’s nuclear facilities in 2012 or acquiesce? In reality, both choices are bad and the opportunities for prevention are dwindling. “Strategic patience,” which includes sanctions, is the current policy, but it is unclear what will happen. Israel, for example, could act independently.

Despite the high stakes, significant organizational capabilities, and the intense political nature of decision-making at the top, there are similarities with the skills and tools used by leaders making decisions from the bottom, such as social entrepreneurs who must build capabilities and exercise influencing skills just to start their initiatives.

LEADING FROM THE SIDE: SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

Unlike leaders of large, established organizations, social entrepreneurs pursue a goal within the context of severe resource constraints, said Aviva Luz Argote, Director of the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations at the Harvard Kennedy School. The mere act of starting a social enterprise involves a series of critical decisions about models, resources, and partnerships following the birth of an entrepreneurial idea.

Different experiences and backgrounds may lead to the decision to become an entrepreneur in order to tackle a significant social problem. Doug Rauch, former President of Trader Joe’s and a 2010 Advanced Leadership Fellow, helped scale the supermarket chain for many years before he became a Fellow in order to search for a solution to food deserts in inner cities.

Seth Flaxman, the Co-Founder of TurboVote and youngest panelist, was active as an undergraduate at Columbia University and thought about how the Internet could revolutionize the public sector. Initially, he thought it could be done inside the government, but then realized it was best achieved as an entrepreneur by making voting as easy as using Netflix.

After 20 years working as an anesthesiologist, Nancy E. Oriol, MD, Associate Professor of Anesthesia and Dean of Students at Harvard Medical School and Founder of Family Van, was well aware of the disparities in health care in Boston. Dr. Oriol wanted to tackle the issue by taking care to the patients and showing that by listening to them, you get better results.

Finally, Jim Bildner, Senior Research Fellow with the Hauser Center at the Harvard Kennedy School, had successes and failures running companies and serving in public offices, but saw the opportunity to be more impactful by bringing together funders and philanthropists to support community-level organizations.

The formation of coalitions and alliances were critical. “Success as an entrepreneur relies on partnerships,” said Doug Rauch. “Connect the dots. Nothing is a dead end.” Nancy Oriol called many people to ask what they thought about her idea until she found a business partner. For Flaxman, his initiative did not become real until he asked his co-founder to join him, creating the time to work on the idea by meeting for two hours during their busy week.

Given that social entrepreneurs sought to lead path-breaking change irrespective of resources, they confronted significant decisions about how to access capital. “The pursuit of capital is always required as a first instance,” said Jim Bildner, who observed that the decisions often involved answering questions about how to divert resources. Doug Rauch observed that the for-profit and non-profit worlds are equally competitive but in different ways. For-profit competition is based on the product – do you have a product or service that can make money? It requires convincing buyers or consumers. In the non-profit world, the competition is around funding – do you have a product or service that meets a need in an innovative way? It calls for making the case to donors. Finally, Bildner, Flaxman, Oriol, and Rauch concurred that pursuing a social enterprise required personal energy and commitment. Bildner commented that it is the willingness of the individual to give everything to the cause which separates entrepreneurs and is the “distinguishing” factor. Flaxman agreed, quoting: “The thing that separated the Google guys from everybody else wasn’t that they were smarter, just that they were bolder.”
Leadership and Decision-Making: Past and Future

Whether leading at the top or from the bottom, making decisions as Advanced Leaders about difficult social problems calls for significant awareness of one’s situation, of others, and of one’s self. At the conclusion of the Think Tank, participants reflected on their past decisions as leaders which would help increase one’s awareness for future decisions taken as Advanced Leaders. Breakout groups identified numerous themes revolving around how the “self” should approach decisions.

Whether leading at the top or from the bottom, making decisions as an Advanced Leader about a difficult social problem calls for significant awareness of the situation, of others, and of the self. At the conclusion of the Think Tank, participants reflected on their past decisions as leaders, which would help increase their awareness for future decisions taken as Advanced Leaders. Breakout groups identified numerous themes on how the “self” should approach decisions:

- **Passion:** Find your drive. It will give you the willingness to give it your all. Many think they will want to be “all in” at first, but once an endeavor starts, this motivation may change. True passion continues to fuel initiatives.

- **Know yourself:** Be aware of what you are good at, what skills you have, and where you need to bring in others. Remember your network. Be true to yourself and be aware of the founder’s dilemma – i.e., the founder of an enterprise may not be suited to manage it in the future.

- **Do-ability:** Keep in mind the viability of your project. When scaling a non-profit, determine how to measure success so you can track progress.

- **Context Matters:** The situation can often be outside of one’s control, requiring adaptability. There will be exogenous shocks you cannot anticipate. Context also shapes in unconscious ways how you make decisions.

- **Resilience:** Having impact requires both staying the course and being flexible during the journey. Manage the unexpected and integrate feedback.

As Daniel Gilbert commented earlier during the event, although humans can imagine the future and anticipate what will happen and its consequences, there is often a discrepancy between our predictions of what will make us happy versus our actual happiness. We can be strangers to ourselves. When we imagine the future we leave things out, which matters a great deal. When thinking about what we want in the future, it is hard to escape what we want or how we feel in the present. We are more resilient than we realize and have the ability to rationalize ambiguous or negative events positively. But without doing these things, society would not continue, Gilbert said. The same lessons may well apply to Advanced Leaders.
Appendices
**THURSDAY, MARCH 29, 2012**

**LEADERSHIP AND DECISION**

**WELCOME:** Peter B. Zimmerman | Co-Chair, Advanced Leadership Initiative and Senior Associate Dean for Strategic Program Development, Harvard Kennedy School

**SESSION 1: JUDGMENT AND DECISION - THE SCIENCE OF DECISION: WHAT DO WE KNOW, WHAT ARE WE LEARNING, WHAT ARE THE UNANSWERED QUESTIONS?**

| SPEAKERS       | Max H. Bazerman | Jesse Isidor Straus Professor of Business Administration, Harvard Business School  
|----------------|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------
|                | Jennifer Lerner | Professor of Public Policy and Management, Harvard Kennedy School                 
|                | David Laibson   | Robert I. Goldman Professor of Economics, Harvard University                       

**SESSION 2: HAPPINESS: FOUR THINGS YOUR MOTHER DIDN’T TELL YOU**

| SPEAKER        | Daniel Gilbert  | Robert I. Goldman Professor of Economics, Harvard University                     

FRIDAY, MARCH 30, 2012

SESSION 3: DECISIONS IN WAR AND PEACE

SPEAKER  Graham Allison  |  Douglas Dillon Professor of Government, Harvard Kennedy School

SESSION 4: LET’S GET GOING: STARTING A SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

CHAIR  Aviva Luz Argote  |  Executive Director, Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations, Harvard Kennedy School

SPEAKERS  Jim Bildner  |  Senior Research Fellow and Adjunct Lecturer in Public Policy, Harvard Kennedy School

Nancy E. Oriol  |  Associate Professor of Anesthesia, Dean for Students and Lecturer on Social Medicine, Harvard Medical School

Douglas Rauch  |  2010 Advanced Leadership Fellow

Seth Flaxman  |  Executive Director, TurboVote

SESSION 5: THE ECONOMY

SPEAKER  Lawrence H. Summers  |  Charles W. Eliot University Professor and Frank and Denie Weil Director of the Mossavar-Rahmani Center for Business and Government, Harvard Kennedy School

SESSION 6: DECISIONS AT THE TOP: PRESIDENTS AND THEIR DECISIONS

CHAIR  Peter B. Zimmerman  |  Co-Chair, Advanced Leadership Initiative and Senior Associate Dean for Strategic Program Development, Harvard Kennedy School

SPEAKERS  David Gergen  |  Co-Chair, Advanced Leadership Initiative; Director, Center for Public Leadership and Public Service Professor of Public Leadership, Harvard Kennedy School

Elaine C. Kamarck  |  Lecturer in Public Policy, Harvard Kennedy School

Roger B. Porter  |  IBM Professor of Business and Government, Harvard Kennedy School

SATURDAY, MARCH 31, 2012

LEADERSHIP AND DECISION-MAKING: PAST AND FUTURE

LEADER  Peter B. Zimmerman  |  Co-Chair, Advanced Leadership Initiative and Senior Associate Dean for Strategic Program Development, Harvard Kennedy School

DISCUSSION 1: LOOKING BACK: HARD DECISIONS IN MY CAREER

DISCUSSION 2: LOOKING AHEAD: DECISION TIME
APPENDIX 2: THINK TANK PANELISTS

Graham Allison  
Belfer Center for Science  
Harvard Kennedy School

Aviva Luz Argote  
Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations  
Harvard Kennedy School

Max H. Bazerman  
Harvard Business School

Jim Bildner  
Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations  
Harvard Kennedy School

Seth Flaxman  
TurboVote

David Gergen  
Center for Public Leadership  
Harvard Kennedy School

Daniel Gilbert  
Harvard University

Elaine C. Kamarck  
Harvard Kennedy School

David Laibson  
Harvard University

Jennifer Lerner  
Harvard Kennedy School

Nancy E. Oriol  
Harvard Medical School  
Family Van

Roger B. Porter  
Harvard Kennedy School

Douglas Rauch  
2010 Advanced Leadership Senior Fellow

Lawrence H. Summers  
Harvard Kennedy School  
Harvard University

Peter B. Zimmerman  
Harvard Kennedy School
APPENDIX 3: 2012 ADVANCED LEADERSHIP FELLOWS

2012 ADVANCED LEADERSHIP FELLOWS

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Former CEO of Tata Group Heavy Vehicle Axles Ltd. and Heavy Vehicle Transmissions Ltd.

Federico Castellanos
Former Vice President of Human Resources Integration, IBM

J. Anthony Clancy
Former Chief Operating Officer for Human Resources, Accenture

Nusret Cömert
Former Managing Director, Royal Dutch Shell Group Exploration & Production and Gas & Power

Steven D. Domenikos
Former CEO and Founder, IdentityTruth Inc.

Mark Feinberg, MD
Former Vice President & Chief Public Health and Science Officer, Merck Vaccines

Mary Finan
Former Chairman and Managing Director, Wilson Hartnell Public Relations

Anne Greenwood
Former Managing Director and Head of Client Development, Morgan Stanley Smith Barney

Alain Martin
Past President and CEO, The Professional Development Institute

E. Robert Meaney
Former Senior Vice President, Valmont Industries, Inc.

Diane Nordin
Former Partner, Wellington Management Company, LLP

Iyabo Obasanjo-Bello
Former Chairman of the Senate Committee on Health, Government of Nigeria

Carol Raphael
Former President and CEO, Visiting Nurse Service of New York

Michael Robertson
Managing Director and Partner, IRON Ventures LLC

Robin Russell
Former Senior Executive Vice President of Worldwide Operations Marketing & Distribution, Sony Pictures Entertainment

Dennis Scholl
Vice President/Arts, Knight Foundation

Steven Strauss
Former Managing Director, New York City Economic Development Corporation

Reyes Tamez Guerra
Former Secretary of Education of Mexico

Skip Victor
Senior Managing Director, Duff & Phelps and Co-Founder Balnoral Advisors

David Wing
Former Vice President and Controller, United Air Lines, Inc.

Peter Wirth
Former Executive Vice President, Legal and Corporate Development, Genzyme Corporation

Dona Young
Former Chairman, President and CEO, The Phoenix Companies

2012 ADVANCED LEADERSHIP SENIOR RESEARCH FELLOW

James Champy
Chairman Emeritus, Dell Services Consulting

2012 SENIOR ADVANCED LEADERSHIP FELLOWS

Issa Baluch
Former President, International Federation of Freight Forwarders’ Association (FIATA)

Gilberto Dimenstein
Daily National Affairs Journalist, Grupo Folha

John Taysom
Founder and Former Managing Director, Reuters Greenhouse, The Reuters Venture Capital Fund

David Weinstein
Former Chief of Administration, Fidelity Investments
APPENDIX 4: ADVANCED LEADERSHIP FACULTY

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Ernest L. Arbuckle Professor of Business Administration
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Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Chair and Director
Rosabeth Moss Kanter holds the Ernest L. Arbuckle Professorship at Harvard Business School, where she specializes in strategy, innovation, and leadership for change. Her strategic and practical insights have guided leaders of large and small organizations worldwide for over 25 years, through teaching, writing, and direct consultation to major corporations and governments. The former Editor of *Harvard Business Review* (1989-1992), Professor Kanter has been repeatedly named to lists of the “50 most powerful women in the world” (*Times of London*), and the “50 most influential business thinkers in the world” (Thinkers 50). In 2001, she received the Academy of Management’s Distinguished Career Award for her scholarly contributions to management knowledge; and in 2002 was named “Intelligent Community Visionary of the Year” by the World Teleport Association; and in 2010 received the International Leadership Award from the Association of Leadership Professionals. She is the author or co-author of 18 books. Her latest book, *SuperCorp: How Vanguard Companies Create Innovation, Profits, Growth, and Social Good*, a manifesto for leadership of sustainable enterprises, was named one of the ten best business books of 2009 by Amazon.com. A follow-up article, “How Great Companies Think Differently,” received *Harvard Business Review’s* 2011 McKinsey Award for the year’s two best articles.

James P. Honan, Co-Chair and Senior Associate Director
James P. Honan has served on the faculty at the Harvard Graduate School of Education since 1991. He is also a faculty member at the Harvard Kennedy School and a principal of the Hauser Center for Nonprofit Organizations. He is Educational Co-Chair of the Institute for Educational Management and has also been a faculty member in a number of Harvard’s other executive education programs and professional development institutes for educational leaders and nonprofit administrators, including the Harvard Seminar for New Presidents, the Management Development Program, the ACRL/Harvard Leadership Institute, the Principals’ Center, and the Harvard Institute for School Leadership; Governing for Nonprofit Excellence, Strategic Perspectives in Nonprofit Management, NAACP Board Retreat, and Habitat for Humanity Leadership Conference (Faculty Section Chair); and Strategic Management for Charter School Leaders, Achieving Excellence in Community Development, American Red Cross Partners in Organizational Leadership Program and US/Japan Workshops on Accountability and International NGOs.

Barry R. Bloom, Co-Chair
Barry R. Bloom, formerly Dean of the Harvard School of Public Health, is Harvard University Distinguished Service Professor and Joan L. and Julius H. Jacobson Professor of Public Health. Bloom has been engaged in global health for his entire career and made fundamental contributions to immunology and to the pathogenesis of tuberculosis and leprosy. He served as a consultant to the White House on International Health Policy from 1977 to 1978, was elected President of the American Association of Immunologists in 1984, and served as President of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology in 1985.

David E. Bloom, Executive Board
David E. Bloom is Clarence James Gamble Professor of Economics and Demography in the Department of Global Health and Population, Harvard School of Public Health. Dr. Bloom also serves as Director of Harvard’s Program on the Global Demography of Aging. He is an economist whose work focuses on health, demography, education, and labor. In recent years, he has written extensively on primary, secondary, and tertiary education in developing countries and on the links among health status, population dynamics, and economic growth. Dr. Bloom has published over 300 articles, book chapters, and books in the fields of economics and demography.

APPENDIX 4: ADVANCED LEADERSHIP FACULTY
Arnold M. Epstein, Executive Board
Arnold M. Epstein, MD, is Chair of the Department of Health Policy and Management at the Harvard School of Public Health where he is the John H. Foster Professor of Health Policy and Management. He is also Professor of Medicine and Health Care Policy at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Epstein’s research interests focus on quality of care and access to care for disadvantaged populations. Recently his efforts have focused on racial and ethnic disparities in care, public reporting of quality performance data and incentives for quality improvement, and Medicaid policies. He has published more than 150 articles on these and other topics. During 1993–1994, Dr. Epstein worked in the White House where he had staff responsibility for policy issues related to the health care delivery system, especially quality management.

William W. George, Executive Board
Bill George is a Professor of Management Practice at Harvard Business School, where he is teaching leadership and leadership development, and is the Henry B. Arthur Fellow of Ethics. He is the author of the best-selling books True North, Discover Your Authentic Leadership and Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets of Creating Lasting Value. Bill currently serves on the boards of ExxonMobil and Goldman Sachs. He is the former Chairman and CEO of Medtronic. Under his leadership, Medtronic’s market capitalization grew from $1.1 billion to $60 billion, averaging a 35% increase each year. Mr. George has made frequent appearances on television and radio, and his articles have appeared in numerous publications.

David R. Gergen, Co-Chair
David Gergen is a senior political analyst for CNN and has served as an adviser to four U.S. presidents. He is a public service professor of public leadership at the Harvard Kennedy School and the director of its Center for Public Leadership. In 2000, he published the best-selling book, Eyewitness to Power: The Essence of Leadership, Nixon to Clinton. Gergen joined the Harvard faculty in 1999. He is active as a speaker on leadership and sits on many boards, including Teach for America, the Aspen Institute, and Duke University, where he taught from 1995-1999.

Allen S. Grossman, Executive Board
Allen Grossman was appointed a Harvard Business School Professor of Management Practice in July 2000. He joined the Business School faculty in July 1998, with a concurrent appointment as a visiting scholar at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. He served as president and chief executive officer of Outward Bound USA for six years before stepping down in 1997 to work on the challenges of creating high performing nonprofit organizations. His current research focuses on leadership and management in public education; the challenges of measuring nonprofit organizational performance; and the issues of managing multi-site nonprofit organizations.

Monica C. Higgins, Executive Board
Monica Higgins joined the Harvard faculty in 1995 and is currently a Professor of Education at Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) where her research and teaching focus on the areas of leadership development and organizational change. Prior to joining HGSE, she spent eleven years as a member of the faculty at Harvard Business School in the Organizational Behavior Unit. In education, Professor Higgins is studying the effectiveness of senior leadership teams in large urban school districts across the United States and the conditions that enhance organizational learning in public school systems. While at Harvard, Professor Higgins’ teaching has focused on the areas of leadership and organizational behavior, teams, entrepreneurship, and strategic human resources management.
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Rakesh Khurana, Co-Chair
Rakesh Khurana is the Marvin Bower Professor of Leadership Development at the Harvard Business School. He teaches a doctoral seminar on Management and Markets and The Board of Directors and Corporate Governance in the MBA program. Khurana received his BS from Cornell University in Ithaca, New York and his AM (Sociology) and PhD in Organization Behavior from Harvard University. Prior to attending graduate school, he worked as a founding member of Cambridge Technology Partners in Sales and Marketing.

Robert H. Mnookin, Executive Board
Robert H. Mnookin is the Samuel Williston Professor of Law at Harvard Law School, the Chair of the Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School, and the Director of the Harvard Negotiation Research Project. A leading scholar in the field of conflict resolution, Professor Mnookin has applied his interdisciplinary approach to negotiation and conflict resolution to a remarkable range of problems; both public and private. Professor Mnookin has taught numerous workshops for corporations, governmental agencies and law firms throughout the world and trained many executives and professionals in negotiation and mediation skills. In his most recent book, Bargaining with the Devil: When to Negotiate, When to Fight, Mnookin explores the challenge of making such critical decisions.

Charles J. Ogletree, Jr., Co-Chair
Charles Ogletree is the Harvard Law School Jesse Climenko Professor of Law, and founding and executive director of the Charles Hamilton Houston Institute for Race and Justice (www.charleshamiltonhouston.org) named in honor of the visionary lawyer who spearheaded the litigation in Brown v. Board of Education. Professor Ogletree is a prominent legal theorist who has made an international reputation by taking a hard look at complex issues of law and by working to secure the rights guaranteed by the Constitution for everyone equally under the law. Ogletree has examined these issues not only in the classroom, on the Internet, and in the pages of prestigious law journals, but also in the everyday world of the public defender in the courtroom and in public television forums where these issues can be dramatically revealed.

Fernando M. Reimers, Co-Chair
Fernando Reimers is the Ford Foundation Professor of International Education and Director of the Global Education and International Education Policy Program at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Professor Reimers focuses his research and teaching on identifying education policies that support teachers in helping low-income and marginalized children succeed academically. His courses focus on the core education challenges in the development field and on the role of social entrepreneurs in creating solutions of value to improve the quality and relevance of education. His current research in Brazil and Mexico focuses on the impact of education policy, education leadership and teacher professional development on literacy competencies and civic skills. He is currently serving on the Global Learning Leadership Council of the American Association of Colleges and Universities Project “General Education for a Global Century” focusing on some of the pressing issues related to global learning and undergraduate education.

Forest L. Reinhardt, Executive Board
Forest L. Reinhardt is the John D. Black Professor of Business Administration at Harvard Business School and serves as the faculty chair of Harvard Business School’s European Research Initiative. Professor Reinhardt is interested in the relationships between market and nonmarket strategy, the relations between government regulation and corporate strategy, the behavior of private and public organizations that manage natural resources, and the economics of externalities and public goods. He is the author of Down to Earth: Applying Business Principles to Environmental Management, published by Harvard Business School Press.
**Guhan Subramanian, Executive Board**

Guhan Subramanian is the Joseph Flom Professor of Law and Business at the Harvard Law School and the H. Douglas Weaver Professor of Business Law at the Harvard Business School. He is the only person in the history of Harvard University to hold tenured appointments at both HLS and HBS. At HLS he teaches courses in negotiations and corporate law. At HBS he teaches in executive education programs, such as Strategic Negotiations, Changing the Game, Managing Negotiators and the Deal Process, and Making Corporate Boards More Effective. He is the faculty chair for the JD/MBA program at Harvard University and Vice Chair for Research at the Harvard Program on Negotiation.

**Ronald S. Sullivan, Jr., Executive Board**

Professor Ronald S. Sullivan, Jr. joined Harvard's law faculty in July 2007. His areas of interest include criminal law, criminal procedure, legal ethics, and race theory. Prior to teaching at Harvard, Professor Sullivan served on the faculty of the Yale Law School, where, after his first year teaching, he won the law school's award for outstanding teaching. Professor Sullivan is the faculty director of the Harvard Criminal Justice Institute. He also is a founding fellow of The Jamestown Project.

Professor Sullivan is a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Morehouse College, and the Harvard Law School, where he served as president of the Black Law Students Association and as a general editor of the Harvard BlackLetter Law Review. After graduating from Harvard, Professor Sullivan spent a year in Nairobi, Kenya as a Visiting Attorney for the Law Society of Kenya.

**Peter Brown Zimmerman, Co-Chair**

Peter Brown Zimmerman is Lecturer in Public Policy and Senior Associate Dean for Strategic Program Development at the Harvard Kennedy School. He also serves as faculty Chair of the Senior Executive Fellows Program and is Co-Chair of the Advanced Leadership Initiative. He is a graduate of the Kennedy School’s Public Policy program. Before coming to Harvard, he worked for the US Navy, on the National Security Council staff and on the staff of the Senate Intelligence Committee. He has consulted with and advised a wide range of public and nonprofit organizations.
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