

- **Traits.** Spurred by the national best seller *In Search of Excellence* (Peters & Waterman, 1982), the leadership-as-excellence movement brought leader traits back to the spotlight. As a result, many people's understanding of leadership is based on a trait orientation.
- **Transformation.** Burns (1978) is credited for initiating a movement defining leadership as a transformational process, stating that leadership occurs "when one or more persons engage with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (p. 83).

## From the 1990s Into the 21st Century

Debate continues as to whether leadership and management are separate processes, but emerging research emphasizes the *process* of leadership, whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal, rather than developing new ways of defining leadership. Among these emerging leadership approaches are

- **authentic leadership**, in which the authenticity of leaders and their leadership is emphasized;
- **spiritual leadership**, which focuses on leadership that utilizes values and sense of calling and membership to motivate followers;
- **servant leadership**, which puts the leader in the role of servant, who utilizes "caring principles" to focus on followers' needs to help these followers become more autonomous, knowledgeable, and like servants themselves;
- **adaptive leadership**, in which leaders encourage followers to adapt by confronting and solving problems, challenges, and changes;
- **followership**, which puts a spotlight on followers and the role followers play in the leadership process; and
- **discursive leadership**, which posits that leadership is created not so much through leader traits, skills, and behaviors, but through communication practices that are negotiated between leader and follower (Aritz, Walker, Cardon, & Zhang, 2017; Fairhurst, 2007).

After decades of dissonance, leadership scholars agree on one thing: They can't come up with a common definition for leadership. Because of such factors as growing global influences and generational differences, leadership will continue to have different meanings for different people. The bottom line is that leadership is a complex concept for which a determined definition may long be in flux.

**Source:** Adapted from *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century*, by J. C. Rost, 1991, New York, NY: Praeger.