

Keynote presentation

Challenges of collective leadership research: reflections from a research agenda on leadership for social change

Collective leadership represents a complex landscape of research that captures diverse scholarship on the shared, distributed, pooled, relational and co-constructed dimensions of leadership. Addressing the challenges this scholarship faces can contribute to strengthen our knowledge to better understand the social phenomenon we call leadership. In this talk I share three challenges I have encountered, drawing from selected projects from a 20-year journey where I've used a collective lens to study leadership in social change contexts. The featured challenges are: clarifying the meaning of *collective* in collective leadership research; deciding what is to be identified and labeled as leadership in the world; and constructing cumulative knowledge when doing research that emphasizes the "local" in the emergence of leadership. I conclude with a critical reflection on leadership studies and invite the audience to share the dilemmas and challenges experienced in their journey to study leadership, particularly when considering its collective dimensions.

Sonia M. Ospina is Professor of Public Management and Policy at New York University's Wagner Graduate School of Public Service. Her interest in collaborative governance is translated into research on social change leadership, social innovation and public management reform. In the past decades she has explored collective leadership as an approach to studying leadership in organizations and society. An expert in qualitative research, she works in the United States and Latin America, and has numerous books and journal articles both in English and Spanish, including the co-edited *Advancing Relational Leadership Research: A Conversation Across Perspectives* (2012) and the co-authored *Social Innovation and Democratic Leadership: Communities and Social Change from Below* (2017). Ospina is the lead guest co-editor in the journal *Human Relations* for a forthcoming Special Issue on Collective leadership, and co-editor of the forthcoming *SAGE Handbook on Participatory Research and Inquiry*. Born in the US to Colombian parents, Sonia grew up in Bogotá, where she worked in the education field until her return to the US. She has now lived for 30 years in New York City. Sonia's life and work commitments embody a transnational and intercultural perspective grounded in her bi-cultural experience and her strong ties to both countries.