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# **The Fritz Roethlisberger Memorial Award Goes to “Using Leadered Groups in Organizational Behavior and Management Survey Courses”**

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We believe that Fritz J. Roethlisberger would appreciate and embrace the keen insights presented in the article selected for the *Journal of Management Education*'s best article of the year award, an award named in honor of Dr. Roethlisberger's legacy in the field of organizational behavior. Through his early work as a co-investigator in the Hawthorne Studies, Roethlisberger challenged the Tayloristic assumption that a factory was a rational impersonal machine to be controlled by its operators—its managers. He drew attention to the complex social dynamics at play in small work groups—dynamics that frequently eluded managerial control. He was committed to seeing organizations as social systems with the potential to inspire extraordinary purpose, meaning, and innovation. Throughout his career, he shined a bright light on our unseen assumptions, enriching our understanding of human relations, motivation, and organizational life.

The Fritz J. Roethlisberger Memorial Award for the best article in the 2011 *Journal of Management Education* goes to Rae André for her article

Using Leadered Groups in Organizational Behavior and Management Survey Courses (*Journal of Management Education*, Volume 35, Number 5, pp. 596-619).

In keeping with Roethlisberger's legacy, this year's best article questions the widespread use of “leaderless” groups as a pedagogical tool in our management classrooms. Rather than directing our attention toward a new challenge facing management education, this article invites us to reconsider a foundational practice on which so much of organizational behavior instruction uncritically rests. André problematizes the assumption that students are best left to sort out and structure their own class groups. She challenges the notion that the leadership that “naturally” emerges within groups serves our larger learning goals.

The selection committee felt that André adds a critical missing piece to the pedagogy of group work and experiential learning. In fact, her article tapped into such an unspoken set of assumptions that it

necessitated the coining of a new adjective—*leadered*—to identify when a group has a formally designated leader, in contrast to one where leadership is not formally assigned.

The article makes a number of compelling arguments relevant to both theories of group process and classroom practice. The main argument is that what she calls the leadered group project (LGP) creates opportunities for all students to develop their leadership and group member skills. First, requiring all students to play the role of leader at some point during the course provides an opportunity to develop managerial leadership skills, including organizing work and motivating others. Second, the rotation of the leadership role allows students to “try on,” observe, and get feedback on many different group roles and leadership styles throughout the term. Standing leaderless groups may lapse into the same patterns of interaction: for example, domination by the most assertive members, freeloading issues, or the proliferation of a nonproductive, “fun” student culture that bears little resemblance to business culture. By using the LGP, the instructor can structure parameters to ensure opportunity, responsibility, accountability, and feedback.

André provides a detailed synopsis of the LGP for a nine-session course. Along with the helpful description, she offers her insights into the pitfalls and successes of implementing LGP. This is provided not only through her own reflections but also through student comments collected over the years.

Her ideas, drawing on theories of cooperative learning, are particularly valuable to an organizational behavior course in that leadership skill development must be front and center but within the protected, learning incubator of the classroom. This reminds us of an important distinction between the classroom and the workplace: In a workplace, one could argue that we ought to specialize—assigning roles based on individual competencies to maximize efficiency. However, this argument does not hold in a classroom setting where students should feel free to experiment with different roles and styles and where process efficiency is not the primary goal.

The selection committee based our decision on the following criteria, which were developed and used by previous committees: potential for reaching across disciplines, ease of adoption in courses, potential to reach many students, longevity of contribution, significance to the field of management education, originality/innovative nature of the work, and assessment of scholarship.

The selection committee for this year’s Roethlisberger Award included Mandy O’Neill (George Mason University), William Van Buskirk (La Salle University), Jenny Hoobler (co-chair, University of Illinois at Chicago), Denise Lewin Loyd (co-chair, Massachusetts Institute of Technology), and Lisa Amoroso (co-chair, Dominican University). The committee is grateful to Associate Editor of *Journal of Management Education* Gordon Meyer (Canisius College) and the anonymous reviewers of this article for their contributions as it moved from initial submission to polished product. Congratulations to this year’s award winner, Rae André.