Self-assessment and leadership development: an overview

Mitchell G. Rothstein and Ronald J. Burke

This volume fills what we see as a critical gap in the research and writing on leadership and leadership development. The topic of leadership is, arguably, the subject of more research and writing than any other topic in the management literature. A search of the Amazon.com data base reveals that there are currently over 8500 books in print with leadership in the title and over 19800 books listed on the topic of leadership. In addition, there are hundreds of research articles on leadership published in academic journals. Despite this vast literature, our understanding of leadership and how to develop leaders is still falling short. For example, evidence suggests that a shortage of effective leaders exists (Michaels et al, 2001), that organizations are not doing a satisfactory job at developing future leaders (Fulmer and Conger, 2004), and that between 50 to 75 per cent of individuals in leadership positions are underperforming (Hogan and Hogan, 2001), an estimate borne out by the tenure of individuals holding senior level leadership positions, which has steadily fallen over the past two decades (Burke, 2006; Burke and Cooper, 2006).

Leadership research has been ongoing for decades. Although this research has accumulated a body of knowledge informing us of what leaders do (for example, Yukl, 1998), this work has not generally been useful in contributing to our understanding of how leaders develop. There are several possible explanations for this. First, a considerable amount of this research has focused on what makes leaders successful, in the sense of what they accomplished, rather than on how they developed the expertise to contribute to the success of the work units they lead. Second, organizations have tolerated bad leadership and bad leaders. There was a period during which larger environmental factors (for example, lack of competition, trade barriers, proprietary technology) contributed to making many organizations successful even though their leaders were falling short. In addition, until recently, followers rarely complained about failing leadership (Kellerman, 2004). Third, most research has had a positive and optimistic bias, assuming that leaders were generally successful by virtue
of holding leadership positions. Efforts were then made to identify factors associated with their successes. Relatively little research focused on leadership shortcomings, failures or derailments, or the ‘dark side’ of leadership, with some notable exceptions (for example, Van Velsor and Leslie, 1995). The character and behavioral flaws that limited effectiveness have not received adequate attention until very recently. Fourth, organizational efforts to develop leadership talents have been hit and miss (Fulmer and Conger, 2004). Finally, MBA-level courses that address leadership have been criticized as typically too conceptual and taught by individuals who themselves had never been leaders or demonstrated leadership skills (Mintzberg, 2004).

Despite these many problems in the broad-based leadership literature and common organizational leadership development practices, the theoretical and research-based approaches to the study of leadership have in fact produced a body of knowledge on leadership, albeit often contradictory. In a systematic and thorough review of this literature, Yukl (1998) concludes that even though leadership has been studied with very different approaches, reaching in some cases quite different conclusions, nevertheless, we do know a good deal about what leaders actually do. What we know considerably less about, however, is how leaders got there, what developmental paths led them to their positions of leadership, what experiences and achievements were critical to their development, and what role they themselves took to manage their own development. Although some work has been done to investigate and document organizational practices designed to develop leaders, there is very little work published that systematically focuses on the instrumental role required by leaders to manage their own development. This is the subject of the current volume.

Ironically, not only are individuals not faring well in their leadership roles and organizations are not doing a good job of developing their leadership talent, there is also increasing evidence that many leadership aspirants and those already holding leadership positions are dissatisfied and frustrated (Friedman, 2008a; 2008b; Nash and Stevenson, 2004a; 2004b). Although some of this dissatisfaction clearly must be related to the stress of leading in the turbulent times in which we live (Burke and Cooper, 2004), poor selection, promotion and development practices by organizations must also be considered as major factors contributing to poor leadership performance and leaders who are unhappy in their roles. The authors who have contributed to this volume, however, share in the belief that organizations are not solely to blame for poor leadership development practices, and that the responsibility needs to shift more to aspiring leaders to be instrumental in their own development.

The need for effective leaders grows unabated. For example, one of
the biggest challenges faced by business today is coping with rapid and continuous change in markets and competition due to globalization and technological innovations. Many authors, such as Kotter (1996), have highlighted the critical role of leadership in managing these change issues. The sheer volume of research and writing on the subject of leadership underscores the importance of this topic and the value put on increasing our understanding of leadership effectiveness by academics, organizations, and individuals aspiring to be leaders. The need to understand how leaders develop, therefore, remains a subject of critical interest in the business and management literature.

In response to this need, business schools around the world have strengthened their focus on leadership development in both degree programs and executive education programs. In addition to traditional knowledge-based curricula and strategic analysis and decision making, business education has increasingly emphasized leadership skill development. Texts, such as that authored by Whetten and Cameron (1998), that provide skill practice guidelines and exercises have been very popular. Yet there continues to be criticism of business school curricula, in particular with regard to the poor preparation of graduates for assuming leadership roles. In addition, we are constantly made aware of the failures of leaders through research and the popular press. Whether through the pioneering work of the Center for Creative Leadership (for example, Van Velsor and Leslie, 1995) on the factors that lead to the derailment of leaders’ careers, or through the frequent news reports of unethical behavior and poor performance of business leaders, it has been made clear that leaders still fail at a rather alarming rate. Moreover, as the population ages and more people retire, the need for effective leadership throughout all levels of an organization will increase what has been termed the ‘war for talent’ (Michaels et al., 2001). It seems to us, therefore, that despite the immense literature on leadership, and all the efforts to develop leaders by organizations and business schools, the critical need for more effective leaders requires continuing efforts to determine the critical factors that contribute to leadership development.

The present volume addresses this need by taking a perspective that has received little systematic attention by researchers and authors on leadership. Although several books have been published on the topic of leadership development, including an excellent volume produced by the Center for Creative Leadership (McCauley and Van Velsor, 2004), all of the books we are aware of are almost exclusively focused on leadership development practices from the perspective of organizations, training institutions and managers in their role of developing their subordinates. What is clearly missing in this body of work is the important role of
the individual in self-managing his/her own development as an aspiring leader. What are the responsibilities and requirements of aspiring leaders to influence and manage their own development process? How does the critical role of self-awareness impact the self-management process? How does the individual cope with the multitude of challenges faced during the development process? What are the ways and means open to individuals interested in self-managing their own leadership development? What does this self-management process contribute to our understanding of leadership generally, as well as our understanding of how leadership develops most effectively? These and other related questions are critical for individuals to understand in order that they may assume responsibility and take an instrumental role in their own development as a leader.

The need for individuals to take direct personal responsibility for their development has never been greater. Increasingly, as organizations downsize, outsource, and cut costs to deal with fierce competition, globalization, and demands from shareholders to maintain profits, there is little commitment given to leadership development activities at the organizational level. Organizations are no longer willing to commit resources to leadership development because of other short-term needs and the belief that if individuals want to develop, it is up to them to figure out how to do it (Moses, 1997).

OBJECTIVES AND SCOPE OF THIS VOLUME

The goal of this volume is to bring together contributions from leading scholars and practitioners in the leadership development field in a collection that will document current research and practice regarding the self-management of leadership development. Although this topic has been broached by a number of authors previously, it has typically been on an ad hoc basis and most often discussed as tangential to some other topic. For example, there is considerable literature on the critical role of mentors and networks in the career development of leaders, but relatively little discussion of how individuals should manage these important relationships. Similarly, a great deal of research has been conducted on the value of performance feedback as well as how to evaluate performance and provide appropriate personal feedback (cf. Murphy and Cleveland, 1995), but relatively little has been written on how an individual can effectively manage the process of obtaining good feedback and applying it to his/her own leadership development. In general, the role of assessment of leadership skills, values and personality is well recognized at the organizational level to identify and develop leadership talent, but the responsibility of
an individual to engage in self-assessment and develop self-awareness has received very little attention. This volume is the first comprehensive treatment of what is known from research and best practice on the self-management of leadership development.

Our view of leadership development in this volume is deliberately broad and integrated with consideration of challenges faced in the course of adult development. We share the views of Friedman (2008a; 2008b) and Nash and Stevenson (2004a; 2004b) that individuals flourish (or not) in both work and personal life domains and that experiences in one domain are influenced by and in turn influence experiences in most other domains. Friedman’s (2008a; 2008b) concept of ‘total leadership development’ emphasizes becoming successful in all domains of one’s life: private life, family, work and community. According to Friedman, individuals need to value ‘winning’ in all these domains rather than believing that trade-offs are necessary in order to succeed in the work domain. Further, individuals who fail to meet their leadership potential at work often do so because they are falling short in other domains of their life. Similarly, Nash and Stevenson (2004a; 2004b) found in their research that successful leaders integrated four spheres of their lives: happiness (satisfaction with one’s life), achievement (accomplishments that compare favorably with those of others), significance (having a positive impact on people you care about), and legacy (helping others achieve their success). Leaders in the Nash and Stevenson study defined success as obtaining ‘just enough’ in each of the four spheres, rather than maximizing all four or any one of the spheres. Consistent with Friedman, Nash and Stevenson argue that when leaders make trade-offs across these spheres it detracts from their overall feelings of success. The self-management of leadership development must, therefore, attend to and engage activity in all these domains or spheres of life to achieve one’s leadership potential.

THE FOUNDATION OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: SELF-ASSESSMENT AND SELF-AWARENESS

We believe there is a growing consensus among scholars of leadership that self-awareness is the foundation of leadership development and therefore the core of self-management efforts. Self-awareness provides a basis for introspection, choice, priority setting, change and development. Numerous leadership researchers and authors have discussed the critical element of self-awareness in leadership performance. Drucker (1999) advises that success as a leader comes to those who know themselves – their strengths,
their values, and how they best perform. Tichy (1997) refers to a leader’s ability to tell ‘who I am’ stories as essential to their effectiveness. Kotter (1996) discusses the importance of honest and humble self-reflection as one of the critical mental habits of lifelong learning as a leader. The first leadership principle in Useem’s *The Leadership Moment* (1998) is know yourself. Whetten and Cameron’s (1998) textbook, widely used for leadership development in MBA programs, titled *Developing Management Skills*, provides self-assessment exercises in almost every chapter, giving the reader an opportunity to evaluate their current skills and approaches to various leadership challenges (for example, conflict management). These authors, and others, are all emphasizing self-awareness as an essential component of leadership effectiveness. The critical issue of how self-awareness is achieved is, however, most often not articulated.

Attempts to increase self-awareness to guide leadership development are not new. An underlying assumption of many organizationally driven assessment and evaluation systems is that the data derived from these systems will enhance self-awareness and thereby provide focus and motivation to improve in those areas identified as weaknesses. Performance appraisal systems, 360-degree feedback, assessment centers, psychological assessments, formal mentoring, and executive coaching all provide, with various degrees of accuracy and value, information to aspiring leaders on their performance and development needs (Fulmer and Conger, 2004). Some of these systems provide very unique functions in enhancing self-awareness: 360-degree feedback systems broaden the range of information available to leaders to help them see themselves as others see them; performance appraisals and assessment centers tend to focus on skills and performance areas that need immediate improvement or are necessary for promotion; mentoring and executive coaching typically emphasize advice and support regarding behavior and attitude change. There is no question that all of these approaches to increasing self-awareness and thereby performance, if done well, provide value to leadership development. Unfortunately, however, cost controls and short-term goals drive today’s organizations, and individuals are expected to take control of their own leadership development (Moses, 1997). Moreover, assessment provided by organizational systems must focus on what the organization needs, which may or may not be congruent with the development goals of an individual. The individual aspiring leader must take ownership of the assessment process and use the resulting information and insight to meet his/her own needs and development goals. The individual must take direct personal responsibility for his/her own development because no one else will, or is able to, manage the process to achieve the goals the individual truly wants. Self-assessment, therefore, fills a critical need in the leadership development process.
Self-assessment is the means by which self-awareness is achieved, and both the process of self-assessment and the resulting increase in self-awareness are central to the themes of self-management and leadership development in the current volume. Chapter authors repeatedly reinforce these themes throughout the volume, arguing for the contribution of self-awareness to leadership effectiveness and development, and providing specific advice and techniques for self-assessment. For the purposes of this volume, our operational definition of self-assessment and its relationship to leadership development is as follows: self-assessment involves the use of self-knowledge and introspection in a structured and guided format, the generation of information and data about oneself, and the use of this data to enrich understanding of important personal issues (for example, job/career/life satisfaction; defining success; identifying strengths, shortcomings, and areas of potential concern) in order to commit to developmental initiatives that will enrich one’s work, self, family and community.

APPROACHES TO SELF-ASSESSMENT IN LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

As discussed previously, numerous researchers and authors have promoted the value of self-awareness in leadership effectiveness, although for the most part these authors have provided little, if any, detailed advice on conducting a self-assessment process. However, there are a few examples of specific self-assessment techniques that have been published previously, and these are noteworthy. One of the earliest and most thorough approaches to self-assessment was published by Clawson et al., (1992). These authors primarily focused on applications to career development and provided a program rich in detail and with interpretive guidelines intended to assist individuals in making appropriate job and career choices. Although the objectives of the self-assessment process these authors recommended were specifically focused on career development, Clawson et al. provided an excellent model of how self-assessment should be approached, and many of their exercises and techniques could be easily adapted to the purpose of leadership development.

There are several other examples of previously published self-assessment methods that have focused more specifically on leadership development, although the rationale for these approaches is primarily based on promoting self-awareness as a critical leadership competency, rather than as a core component of a broader self-management program for leadership development, which is presented in the current volume. Nevertheless, these approaches to self-assessment complement the approaches and
techniques recommended by authors in the current volume and are worthy of note for the interested reader. For example, previously we discussed Friedman’s (2008a; 2008b) perspective on ‘total leadership development’, which includes becoming successful in all domains of one’s life, not just the work domain. Friedman also developed a self-assessment program to facilitate the development of what he termed ‘Total Leadership’. The program begins with individuals assessing what is important to them, what they want, and what they can contribute to, now and in the future, in each of the four domains of life: private self, family, work and community. Past life events are considered to determine their impact on how individuals currently define who they are today, their chosen direction, their core values, and their leadership vision and aspirations. Discussions with key stakeholders in each domain of the individual’s life are also carried out to determine their expectations of the individual. This is followed by creating and enacting small ‘experiments’ to change behavior to better meet individual and stakeholder needs and expectations in each of the four domains. Continuous self-reflection is a key ingredient in this program, and individuals are encouraged to record their activities, thoughts and feelings during their experiments. Friedman studied hundreds of participants in his Total Leadership Program and reported improvements in their job satisfaction, relationships with both customers and co-workers, and job performance.

Another approach to self-assessment, focusing on ‘strengths’, has been developed by individuals associated with the Gallup Organization (Buckingham, 2007; Buckingham and Clifton, 2001). Based on their research showing that only 17 per cent of the workforce report using all of their strengths on the job, and that those who do use their strengths report working in more productive teams with lower turnover and higher customer satisfaction, Buckingham and Clifton (2001) argue that individuals should focus more on their strengths to enhance performance rather than attempting to improve their weaknesses. In other words, they argue that focusing on what is working rather than what is broken is a better strategy for leadership development. Unfortunately, they find that most people still believe that fixing weaknesses is the best way to improve performance. To facilitate a greater commitment to focusing on strengths, Buckingham and Clifton (2001) developed an inventory of strengths related to leadership and managerial performance and obtained responses from a nationally represented sample of workers in the United States. Individuals taking the inventory are able to compare themselves against this normative sample and determine their own relative strengths and weaknesses. On the basis of this self-assessment, individuals are encouraged to strive to do things that play to their strengths and to avoid activities requiring their weaknesses.
Another self-assessment methodology has been developed by Kaplan and his colleagues (Kaplan, 2006; Kaplan and Kaiser, 2006; 2009) to address what they regard as one of the significant challenges of leadership, the tendency to overreact or underreact to various situations, which results in a negative impact on their performance. According to Kaplan and Kaiser (2006), leaders bring certain ‘baggage’ with them to their leadership roles. This baggage creates sensitivities to circumstances such as fatigue, illness and stress, or feelings of vulnerability, threat, or inadequacy, all of which may help explain why they over- or underreact to various situations, which leads to poor performance. Kaplan (2006) has developed an approach to assess the extent to which a leader exhibits a variety of these reactions. Through self-assessment and feedback from others such as co-workers, leaders come to recognize their over- and underreactions, better understand their behavior, and learn more effective coping responses.

We see therefore, from this discussion, that self-assessment has been recommended for leadership development by a number of authors previously, although not in the context of a broader approach to self-management as presented in the current volume. Nevertheless, these approaches reinforce the value of self-awareness as a core leadership competency and we recommend them as complementary to the methods presented in this text. Authors contributing to this volume address the broader issue of self-management as it applies to numerous responsibilities and challenges faced by leaders and aspiring leaders. Within each of these contributions, the importance of self-awareness as the foundation to self-management will be made clear, and many of our authors will, in addition, provide practical self-assessment tools that contribute to the self-management of leadership development with respect to the specific issue or challenge that is the focus of each chapter.

SELF-MANAGEMENT OF LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT: SOME UNIQUE CONTEXTS

The principles and practices of self-management for leadership development discussed in this volume are for the most part focused on the mythical ‘average’ or typical leader or aspiring leader. We fully acknowledge that there are diverse groups of individuals and unique contexts in which leadership development will face challenges and require solutions that differ from those discussed here. Some of these unique contexts are touched on by our contributors, but the full extent of the diversity of issues cannot be adequately dealt with in this volume. Where possible, we
Self-management and leadership development refer the interested reader to some additional literature regarding several unique contexts in the following paragraphs.

There is increasing evidence that women may bring slightly different skills and strengths to their managerial and professional jobs than men do. In addition, women face different work, family and career realities than men (Burke and Mattis, 2005; Barreto et al., 2009). As a consequence their career landscape is different (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005; 2006). Readers interested in some aspects of the use of self-assessment for women and the unique nature of women’s careers would find useful information in Ruderman and Ohlott (2002), Vinnicombe and Bank (2003), and Eagly and Carli (2007).

Differences in career stage will undoubtedly create differences in the role and value of self-assessment in the lives of mid-career men and women. These individuals have a lot more experience to process, more data to inform their self-assessments, more information on their successes and failures, and a different array of possibilities and choices than do women and men just beginning their careers.

Self-assessment in mid-career can help individuals break out of unsatisfying routines. Managers often are in denial about their circumstances and feelings, and may believe that changing their job/career/organization would be disloyal and difficult, or that their investment in their current position to date makes it difficult to contemplate something different (Drummond and Chell, 2000). These beliefs and feelings can create a sense of being trapped that in turn creates a kind of ‘psychic prison’ of the individual’s own making. Engaging in self-assessment is an effective way to deal with these beliefs and feelings, and enables the individual to identify potential new opportunities that would be more rewarding.

Korman and Korman (1980) studied mid-career issues and coined the term ‘career success and personal failure’ to capture a syndrome that afflicts managers that have the external trappings of career success (high-level jobs, good salaries) but when pressed, admit feelings of estrangement from their work, organizations and families. This syndrome emerges in mid-life since some degree of career success is required, before these individuals start to become aware of aspects of decline (for example, health, goals that will not be reached, feelings of obsolescence). Korman and Korman (1980) identified four ‘cognitive realizations’ that serve as potential contributing factors to career success and personal failure: loss of affiliative satisfactions from work colleagues and family members; a sense of being controlled by external factors (one’s manager and organization, one’s family) in one’s work and career decision making; an appreciation that some things one had expected to happen would not; and a realization that many of the life and work goals that were pursued were
contradictory (for example, meeting organizational demands and having time for family). Korman and Korman (1980) suggest that organizational programs supporting self-assessment, life and career planning, and career change would address the sources of this debilitating syndrome.

Another unique context for leadership development that deserves brief mention is the situation in which models of leadership may vary, for example as a function of operating within a public sector or not-for-profit organization. Self-management strategies may vary in this context to some degree, although we are unable to explore this possibility in detail here. However, Rego and his colleagues discuss an innovative approach to leadership development with youth in the developing world in the current volume. Much more deserves to be said about self-management and leadership development in these unique contexts, and we hope that the current volume will encourage others to conduct research on this topic in these special circumstances.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

We believe that this book should be of interest to a wide variety of readers, including students of leadership, researchers interested in leadership development, and practitioners such as consultants, trainers, human resource professionals, and managers at all levels who are involved with leadership development. The primary focus of this book is, however, on the self-management of leadership development, and therefore we hope that this volume will be especially useful to aspiring leaders. The contents of this collection will provide considerable ‘food for thought’ for all those who aspire to progress in leadership positions throughout their careers. Most importantly, the role of self-awareness in leadership development is reinforced repeatedly by the authors in this volume. Self-awareness provides aspiring leaders with essential knowledge on what they can do themselves to own and manage their development. It helps leaders understand what they need to change and how to integrate their development plans with their opportunities, as well as providing a basis for priority setting and choice of development activities. And perhaps more fundamentally, self-awareness enhances motivation to shift the responsibility for development to the individual leader, a shift that is critical to the long-term career success of all leaders (Useem, 2006).

To obtain full value from this collection, we encourage readers who wish to take a more active role in their own leadership development to allow the material they encounter to stimulate their thinking about how to enhance their self-awareness. We encourage you to reflect on your experiences in
various life roles including work, take stock of your current circumstances, consider reprioritizing some activities, and begin to set some concrete goals for development in one or more life domains. We also encourage you to think about your satisfaction and performance in various domains, as well as your own psychological and physical well-being. You might also find it helpful to solicit support from your spouse or partner, your co-workers, or a valued and trusted peer or mentor in your efforts.

Numerous self-assessment instruments have been included in the various chapters, and in most cases scores from normative samples have been provided (for example, business students, managers, various professional groups). These scores are typically mean values, so a reader can see how they compare with the mean value of a particular normative group. A general rule of thumb when comparing scores with an appropriate normative group is to focus on ‘extreme’ scores, that is, those scores that are considerably higher or lower than the norm. Individuals with extreme scores, again assuming the normative comparison group is appropriate, should more likely expend their energy and resources developing these characteristics or behaviors, as the potential implications of these extreme scores in terms of future satisfaction and effectiveness may be profound.

Once the characteristics or behaviors that you wish to change have been identified, action planning may begin. For example, the following simple process may be followed:

1. Identify five things you want to start doing more of, starting today (be specific). What actions will you undertake? How will you evaluate progress in your efforts? How will you know that you have been successful? What supports do you have in place that will help you in your efforts?
2. Identify five things you want to stop doing or do less of, starting today (be specific). What actions will you undertake? How will you evaluate progress in your efforts? How will you know that you have been successful? What supports do you have in place that will help you in your efforts?

You may also wish to consult the goal-setting and action-planning recommendations of Buckingham (2007) regarding developing your strengths. Whichever method you choose, remember that although the past cannot be changed, the future can be managed.

We believe that leaders and leadership play critical roles in the success of any society. The emphasis on self-awareness and self-assessment in leadership development will have a positive impact on the success of leaders and the effectiveness of their leadership development activities. As
this is borne out, we see value for individuals and their families, for their employing organizations, and for the wider society as a whole. Healthy individuals, healthy families, and healthy organizations all contribute to healthy communities.

**AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CONTENTS OF THE CURRENT VOLUME**

Each chapter in this collection focuses on a unique aspect of self-management as it relates to leadership development. These contributions are grouped into three broad categories: the role of self-awareness and self-assessment in leadership development, the contribution of self-management to common leadership challenges, and unique challenges to self-management related to changes in the global environment of business.

The first part of this volume brings additional perspective to the importance of self-awareness in leadership development. Chapters in this part focus on the critical role of self-assessment to achieve self-awareness, the importance of taking the responsibility to self-assess, and the need to take ownership of the process and data obtained from various sources of developmental feedback. Some general self-assessment techniques are provided, and the value of some specific types of data to leadership development is discussed. The unique perspective of this section is the focus on how the individual takes responsibility and manages these assessment methods, rather than how organizations use these methods.

- Allan Church and Christopher Rotolo (Chapter 1) address the role of the individual learner in self-assessment and leadership development. They position their writing squarely in the organizational context incorporating their work with PepsiCo. They first identify three moderators of effective use of self-assessment and development: organizational culture, supporting tools and processes, and individual characteristics. Individual characteristics that are important include willingness to learn, openness to change, and motivation and ambition to advance. Church and Rotolo offer a typology of ‘leader learners’ based on their organizational practice. A five-phase individual feedback, development and change model is proposed with detailed treatment of the role of the individual learner in the process. Questions are posed for the reader at each stage and helpful responses are identified. In addition, each stage is fleshed out with individual and organizational examples. They also
identify individual obstacles to change and offer suggestions on how these might be addressed.

- Richard Boyatzis, Tony Lingham and Angela Passarelli (Chapter 2) address the questions regarding what competencies make leaders effective and how individuals can be inspired to develop them. Outstanding leaders display cognitive, emotional and social intelligences. The authors use Intentional Change Theory (ICT) to capture the key elements and processes that support sustained and desired changes in behaviors, thoughts, feelings and perceptions. Initial phases of ICT involve self-assessment of real and desired selves. Using data from 22 years of longitudinal assessment, they convincingly show that MBAs can develop competencies associated with effective leadership and management.

- James Clawson (Chapter 3) asserts, like many of the authors in this volume, that leaders must continuously learn, grow and adapt if they are to remain successful, including learning about themselves. The problem Clawson focuses on in this chapter is that so many leaders find it difficult to self-assess and then deal effectively with the findings. This chapter provides an understanding of why leaders do not engage in self-assessment and offers some very positive recommendations on how leaders should overcome this reluctance to engage in a critical component of their development and success. The reluctance to self-assess and use this information effectively to develop stems from a variety of factors including a failure to understand its importance and value (in some cases this is open disdain), an assumption among some that they know all there is to know about themselves already, an inability and/or lack of concern for understanding how their behavior and motives affect others, a belief and drive to do whatever they have to regardless of personal consequences, and a number of other reasons detailed in this chapter. Clawson recommends a variety of ways for leaders to break out of their reluctance to develop better self-awareness such as utilizing 360 feedback to help them see how others see them, developing listening skills, relying less on the power of their positions and more on understanding, and a variety of other helpful suggestions.

- Sandra Davis (Chapter 4) examines one of the most important sources of information potentially available to increase self-awareness, a psychological assessment. Davis begins by describing some common reactions to this source of information by leaders and emerging leaders – they avoid it, minimize its usefulness, and/or just plain ignore it. But Davis provides a convincing rationale for the value of these data to leadership development, especially
if leaders actively engage this information to inform their development activity. To this end, a detailed, step-by-step process is described for how to work effectively with a psychologist to get the most out of feedback from the assessment and use it to guide leadership development. Davis emphasizes the importance of being an active participant in the feedback process. This means engaging the psychologist in a dialogue concerning the feedback, asking questions, and challenging interpretations, not defensively, but in the spirit of gaining clarity. Common assessment tools are then described including what the data means (and does not mean) and how to approach the feedback constructively. Sample questions are provided for probing the meaning of the data with the psychologist. Worksheets are also provided for guiding the process of engaging other stakeholders (boss, peers, direct reports) in the leader’s development.

- Jean Leslie and Ruohong Wei, from the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL), examine the ‘leadership gap’ – the shortfall between current and forecasted leadership capacity (Chapter 5). Using an extensive data base from CCL, they first provide evidence for the leadership gap between present skills of leaders and what they report needing to be more effective now and in the future. The authors argue that these data support an overwhelming need for leadership development. They then focus on the individual and their responsibility for understanding what they need to learn and what they need to do to close their own leadership gaps. An exercise, based on the rich history of CCL leadership research, is provided for readers to self-assess their development needs. Leslie and Wei complete their chapter by providing very specific and helpful recommendations, again based on CCL research, on strategies individuals can employ to close their own leadership gap and manage their own development.

- The self-development of emotional intelligence (EQ) and its contribution to leadership development is the topic discussed in Chapter 6 by Ronald Riggio. He begins by distinguishing between the two models of EQ, the abilities model and the mixed model. This is an important distinction, as the trait component of the mixed model will be more difficult to self-manage. Riggio provides an excellent summary of the controversies in EQ research, the conceptual problems, and the measurement challenges, but despite these difficulties, he makes a good case for the importance of EQ to leadership. Riggio then summarizes the best practices in self-development of EQ and leadership competencies, and he briefly reviews published resources available for use in self-development.
Stewart Emery (Chapter 7) tackles some deep soul-searching leadership questions – do you matter? Are you, as an individual, a positive force in other people’s lives? From these, additional questions follow: who are you? What do you provide? Why does it matter? What are your core values? What do you bring to others? Each of these questions begins with a journey of self-assessment leading to self-awareness. Emery then encourages an exploration of ‘how’ to matter, using actual people as examples. Learning what you do emerges as a central theme here. Individuals can grow to be great by doing work they believe is great, that is, by loving what they do. Deliberate practice is a vital step on this path. Goal-setting and feedback are crucial. He concludes with some questions supportive of deliberate practice. Emery extends the use of self-assessment and self-awareness to some very personal issues that are critical for leaders to consider.

The second part of the book focuses on the contribution of a self-management perspective to numerous challenges faced by leaders during the course of their development and careers. Topics include personal goal-setting, managing your career, managing team performance, resilience, stress and work addiction, and working constructively with mentors and networks. Again, the emphasis here is not the organizational or managerial perspective on how to manage these problems; rather, our contributors focus on how individuals take personal responsibility to manage through these critical leadership issues, how self-reflection and self-awareness aids in the response to these challenges, and how these experiences contribute to leadership development.

John Blenkinsopp, Yehuda Baruch and Ruth Winden (Chapter 8) consider career management in times of economic downturn. The career landscape has changed over the past two decades in significant ways. While individuals have a responsibility for their careers, a surprisingly large number of managers still fail to exercise it. Organizational support for careers is also important, and these authors review a number of organizational career practices including assessment, training and development, and varied experiences. Their use of individual case examples captures current career and organizational realities and illustrates how meshing self-knowledge and organizational needs can foster career and leadership development.

Thomas S. Bateman (Chapter 9) emphasizes goals and feedback in his vision of Self-Directed Leadership (SDL). SDL involves the setting of specific goals. He identifies a variety of personal goals
An overview

that support leadership development. SDL requires making choices, setting specific goals, taking action, and minimizing self-sabotage. Prominent leadership theories are used to identify potential goals that SDL might pursue. Proactive behavior, including both self-assessment and the assessment of others, is central to success in development and the managerial role. He concludes with tangible suggestions regarding moving goals into action.

- **Wendy Bedwell, Marissa Shuffler, Jessica Wildman and Eduardo Salas (Chapter 10)** using a competency-based approach to learning, propose that work teams provide a rich context for self-assessment and leadership development, that is, individuals are provided with opportunities to learn within the context of work teams. Bedwell et al. begin with a review of self-directed work teams (SDWTs) and leadership functions. Their discussion illustrates how leadership functions and team member functions overlap, how leadership development within SDWTs emphasizes self-management, and how self-management is facilitated by self-observation. Best practices are described that allow emerging leaders to take charge of their learning and practice effective leadership skills as well as improving the effectiveness of their SDWT, phases of team development, and team competencies. These best practices include self-criticism, seeking feedback, and providing feedback to others. These processes reinforce the themes seen throughout the chapters in this collection, but they are positioned here in a work team context.

- **Ronald Burke (Chapter 11)** examines the issue of flourishing in leadership and life generally. He provides a practical guide on the self-assessment of factors related to flourishing to determine those that may be risks for the developing leader and that need to be changed to increase leadership and life effectiveness. Specifically, 12 factors that contribute to our understanding of why leaders work so hard are discussed in detail including the consequences (positive and negative) of these different sources of motivation. Available theory and research on each factor is reviewed and a self-assessment exercise is provided in which readers may gain insight into their own motivation for leadership. Implications for flourishing as a leader, in terms of effectiveness as well as well-being, are discussed for each concept and measure provided.

- **Dawn Chandler and Kathy Kram (Chapter 12)** emphasize the role other people play in one’s leadership development. Leadership is essentially a relational process, so it should come as no surprise that other people can be central to its development. Others can support leadership development through mentoring, providing 360-degree
feedback, and the benefits of developmental networks. Chandler and Kram indicate how managers can proactively use relationships to guide their development as leaders. Self-awareness is a critical catalyst in their model. When one is clear about one’s motivations it can lead to the identification of relevant job- and career-related knowledge and career contacts and networks. They offer specific questions one needs to ask to address one’s developmental needs.

- Managers are likely to face failure, disappointment, disillusionment, career setbacks and adversity at points in their lives. Gillian King and Mitchell Rothstein (Chapter 13) discuss the importance of personal resilience at these critical times. Learning from such experiences is vital. Failure offers opportunities for significant personal and career choices with resilience-related processes opening up more directions. Resilience involves ‘bouncing back’. Resilience is a capability and like all capabilities can be strengthened. Their model of resilience in the workplace includes feeling, thought and action components. Each of these is defined, expanded upon and illustrated using management and organization examples. They conclude with suggestions on strengthening resilience.

- Krista Langkamer Ratwani, Stephen Zaccaro, Sena Garven and David Geller (Chapter 14) emphasize self-development on the premise that leaders need to be engaged in continuous learning. Leader self-development requires self-appraisal, self-regulation, and the development of self-learning activities and opportunities, as well as an inventory of available learning resources, and clear definitions of important leadership competencies. Supportive activities include learning tools tied to self-development goals, assessments of learning progress, and ways to stay motivated towards self-development. Langkamer et al. integrate these preparatory and supportive activities into a ‘self-instructional system’ consistent with traditional training models. Social networks (for example, mentors, advisors, coaches, bosses, peers) perform a significant role in both preparatory and supportive initiatives. Developmental social networks expand the range of resources available to emerging leaders. The authors examine the processes of leadership development and the role of developmental social networks, and why these have value, in considerable detail.

In the third part of the book, the topic areas focus on some unique challenges to self-management faced by leaders in the rapidly changing global business context. Topics in this part include challenges faced by women leaders in academia, the next generation of leaders, and global leaders.
Paula Caligiuri and Ruchi Sinha (Chapter 15) apply concepts of self-assessment and self-development to potential global leaders. They begin by outlining tasks or activities among those holding global leadership roles. Cultural agility, the ability of individuals ‘to move quickly and successfully from one cultural context to another’, lies at the heart of their thinking. Individuals can develop global leadership competencies through self-initiated activities and organization-initiated development programs. Individual differences and the self-assessment of these differences are discussed in considerable depth. Self-assessments address knowledge, skills, abilities and personality characteristics necessary for success in other countries and cultures. Tools for supporting such self-assessments are indicated in their chapter.

Linley Lord and Susan Vinnicombe (Chapter 16) discuss the importance of self-management techniques in the context of how they can be used to address a very specific applied problem – the lack of leadership opportunities for women in Australian universities. The authors describe a study they conducted to examine this problem using a qualitative research design. Their purpose was to identify what women in leadership positions, or aspiring to these positions, can do to develop their leadership potential. First, they describe the nature of the problem in Australian universities. Factors such as negative role models, lack of preparation for leadership roles, lack of acceptance or support, and many other components contributing to this problem are identified. The authors then provide recommendations, based on their research, on self-management techniques for women seeking development in these leadership positions. The reader will recognize some of these techniques as they are discussed by several other authors in the current volume, providing support for their general value to leadership development in many organizational contexts (for example, seeking out mentors, developing social networks). One unique self-management technique found in this context, however, was to use negative role models to identify how not to act. Subjects in this study reported this approach was born out of necessity when there were few positive role models to emulate, but that it was a useful and helpful addition to their efforts to self-manage.

Philip Mirvis, Kevin Thompson and Chris Marquis (Chapter 17) examine the question of what leadership skills will be required of the next generation regarding business leaders. They begin by describing the economic and social changes that are already underway, which will add to the complexity of the next generation of leaders’ work.
Just one example of the effect on leaders’ behavior is the demand for more transparency, sustainable business practices, and responsible leadership. Mirvis et al. focus on four domains of developing the next generation of leadership: self-leadership, leading others, leading systems, and leading enterprises. For each domain, they then provide a ‘developmental agenda’ – a detailed analysis of the competencies for next generation leaders. For example, in the domain of self-leadership, they describe the importance of competencies such as self-awareness, reflection, cognitive complexity, tolerance for ambiguity, adaptability, and emotional resilience. Optimal development experiences are next outlined for these competencies, followed by a detailed case example of how IBM’s Corporate Service Corps has incorporated these experiences to develop the next generation of leadership competencies.

- Lyndon Rego, David Altman and Steadman Harrison (Chapter 18) ‘democratize’ leadership development beyond large organizations and extend it to young men and women in the developing world. In their case, leadership development emphasizes building self-awareness and individual skills to be more effective in working with others (that is, soft skills). Their model, Assessment, Challenge and Support (ACS) involves understanding of self and others, identifying growth experiences that lead to development, and providing support and help in reaching growth goals. They provide interesting case examples of how ACS has been used in several developing countries to improve the quality of people’s lives and to build their communities.

SOME CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

There is a growing body of literature in the areas of person–job fit and person–organizational fit showing clearly that individuals who achieve a better fit with their jobs and workplaces are more satisfied and healthy (Leiter and Maslach, 2005). Self-management provides individuals with the opportunity to take responsibility to achieve greater levels of fit with their jobs and careers. The current worldwide economic downturn is forcing many university graduates to reconsider their career options, at least in the short term. Most business school graduates have in the past decade or more gravitated to financial services, consulting and accounting careers, motivated by the high salaries given to individuals working in these areas. The current recession has resulted in significantly fewer firms in these sectors hiring university graduates, and those fortunate enough to
get jobs often take lower salaries. Those without jobs are exploring careers in very different sectors including health care, social services, non-profit organizations, and small businesses. A by-product of these events is that aspiring leaders must learn to self-manage more effectively to thrive in this environment, but by doing so, they may in fact achieve greater levels of person–job and person–organization fit and thereby greater levels of personal satisfaction with their jobs and careers.

REFERENCES


