



Leader self-development as organizational strategy

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ABSTRACT

Leader self-development enables leaders to adapt to the continually changing environment both within and outside of the organization. The purpose of this paper is to describe the construct of leader self-development and the processes by which it can serve as an organizational leadership development strategy. We framed the paper around a multi-level model of leader self-development linking organizational level constructs such as human resources practices and resources with group level phenomena of norms, supervisor style, and social networks with the individual leader self-development process. Leader self-development is a cost-effective way for organizations to develop leaders resulting in competitive edge.

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1. Introduction

In times of changes, learners inherit the earth, while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists. Eric Hoffer

In today's ever-increasing high-tech, global environment, organizations must constantly adapt in order to succeed and survive. Many organizations have turned to formal leader development programs to meet this challenge, budgeting \$51.1 billion for formal organizational training (Training, 2005) with over \$30 billion aimed toward managerial training (Training, 2000). However, the return on investment of formal leader development programs may not adequately prepare leaders for tomorrow's challenges (Avolio et al., 2009). A study by Hewitt Associates (2003) suggests that organizations that fail to align their leader development programs with their business goals and objectives lag behind the "Top 20 Companies for Leaders" in effective leadership programs, high-potential leader development, and senior-level support. In the time it takes to design and implement a formal content-specific leader development program, the needs of the organization may have changed due to dynamic environmental factors. Thus, even those organizations with well-developed leader development programs are at risk of falling behind the curve in preparing leaders.

Although investing in human resources is likely a key to success (Pfeffer, 1994), organizations need different, more cost effective, and adaptive strategies for developing leaders. One approach is to implement leader self-development as organizational strategy. Self-development translates into an enhanced ability to solve problems quickly and generate creative ideas that support organizational adaptability and growth (Phillips, 1993). Thus, learning organizations composed of self-directed learners who are inclined to self-develop have an edge over the competition (Antonacopoulou, 2000). Not only does leader self-development enable organizations to keep up with the dynamics of a changing environment (Antonacopoulou, 2000), but it is also a cost-effective way of developing human resources (Temporal, 1984). However, for leader self-development to be a successful organizational strategy, it must be aligned with

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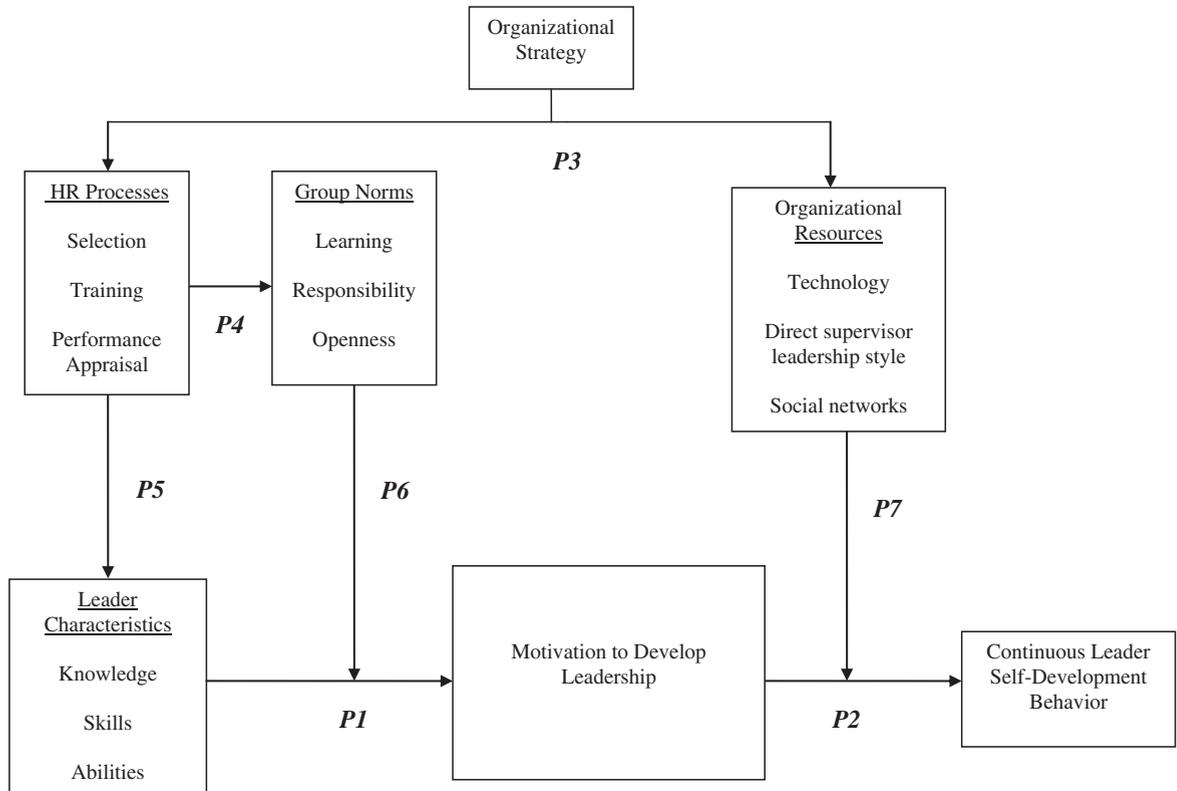
multiple organizational and group level practices. This paper adds to previous research on leadership development and organizational strategy by clearly defining the construct of leader self-development and discussing the influences on leader self-development at three levels of analyses (the target individual, the individual's group, and the organization as a whole).

1.1. Leader self-development model

The proposed theoretical model describes how individuals are transformed into continuous self-developers (Fig. 1). Specifically, this process is influenced by factors operating at the individual, group, and organizational levels of analysis. By examining all three of these levels of analyses, we offer a comprehensive model for understanding how individuals can be transformed into continuous learners within the organizational context. Further, such an examination provides leverage points at the organization and group levels for eliciting such behaviors. We begin this paper by defining leader self-development and then exploring the individual-level characteristics that may predispose one to self-development. In addition, we will describe the individual-level outcomes of self-development behaviors and motivation to develop. Next, we describe the group-level and organization-level antecedents of leader self-development, and how these interact with each other, and the leader's characteristics to achieve self-development outcomes. Finally, we conclude with a discussion of how these individual leader development outcomes can result in overall leadership development for the organization in terms of organizational adaptability or absorptive capacity.

2. Leader self-development

In defining leader self development, Day's (2000) distinction between the concepts of leader development and leadership development is important because we argue that when an organization's strategy supports leader self-development the result is not only an increase in individual leader capacity but also the organization's leadership capacity as a whole. As Day noted, leader development focuses on individual-level development, such as the knowledge, skills, and abilities required by formal leadership roles. Leader development usually takes the form of formal training, job rotation, or off-site workshops where the instructor or coordinator of the program determines what and how the leader will learn. In contrast, leadership development involves building social capital, including networked relationships among employees. Leadership development emphasizes building and using interpersonal competence. To sum up, while leader development focuses on an individual level process of building human capital, leadership development expands the collective capacity of employees and the building of social capital. Using this framework, the



Note. P refers to Proposition.

Fig. 1. Multilevel model of leader self-development. Note. P refers to proposition.

current paper describes the individual process of *leader* self-development as an organizational *leadership* development strategy in which both the organizational and group level processes must first be established. Following this, organizations must implement strategies to enable individual self-development of human capital of an individual leader, which, when systematically in place, is argued to result in an increase in the collective leadership capacity, or social capital, of the organization.

Another key component of the definition of leader self-development that distinguishes it from other types of leader development is that leaders have *control* over learning. Rather than being guided by an instructor's syllabus or following the designated sequences of job rotation, in self-development the leader determines which developmental activities to engage in, if any at all. Furthermore, while leader self-development might include self-management and self-leadership behaviors (e.g., strategies influencing one's own performance), those strategies are specifically focused on developing one's leadership in leader self-development. For example, Frayne and Latham (1987) and Latham and Frayne (1989) demonstrated that job attendance can be improved by training employees on self-leadership strategies of self-assessment, goal-setting, self-monitoring, and reinforcement and punishment; and Manz (1986) expanded the view of self-leadership to include self-influence of tasks that are both naturally and unnaturally motivating. Leader self-development, on the other hand, focuses specifically on the self-development of *leadership* capacities. While an effective self-developer may need the ability to self-manage or self-lead, he or she must also focus that regulation toward developing further leadership abilities. Therefore, self-leadership or self-management, is conceptualized here as a subset of leader self-development.

In sum, leader self-development can be defined as any self-initiated behaviors focused on developing leadership capacities. Boyce, Zaccaro, and Wisecarver (2007, p. 7) extend this definition stating that leader self-development includes the leader "initiating, sustaining, and evaluating growth in their own leadership capacities and in their conceptual frames about the conduct about leadership." Learning is centered on the leader, who directs and is responsible for the *what, where, why, and how* of learning (Murphy & Young, 1995). These concepts reflect a focus on the leader's needs, the leader becoming an active participant in the learning process, and the leader determining which needs are most important.

2.1. Individual level influences

2.1.1. Leader characteristics

The limited work on leader self-development has focused on identifying the individual characteristics that predict one's propensity toward and engagement in self-development (Boyce et al., 2007; Cortina & Zaccaro, 2003; Cortina et al., 2004). Characteristics that relate to one's propensity for development are those characteristics which predict the likelihood that one will become motivated to develop leadership. Some of these characteristics are largely stable (e.g., conscientiousness, intelligence), whereas others are most likely influenced by organizational and group factors (e.g., perceived organizational and supervisor support, and organizational commitment). As we move forward, we will discuss the role of the organization in selecting for these characteristics or working to create them through training and performance management.

In the most comprehensive study on leader self-development, Boyce et al. (2007) identified five categories of individual characteristics that should relate to self-development. These are general intelligence, achievement striving (need for achievement, internal locus of control, and energy), mastery orientation (self-efficacy, conscientiousness, openness to experience, learning goal orientation, intellectual maturity, and meta-cognition), career growth (career experience, feedback seeking), and work orientation (career motivation, job involvement, and organizational commitment). They found that mastery orientation, work, career growth, and work orientation related to self-development, highlighting the importance of both stable and mutable individual characteristics. Needless to say, there are likely to be many other individual characteristics that relate to self-development such as adaptability, self-regulation and self-awareness (Cortina et al., 2004).

Proposition 1. *Leader characteristics (e.g., work orientation, mastery orientation, and career growth) will influence the extent to which leaders become motivated to develop leadership, and therefore, the extent to which they participate in self-development activities.*

2.1.2. Leader self-development behaviors

The individual differences described above should predict the extent to which one engages in self-development behaviors. Although the list of self-development behaviors is endless, we will put forth three main categories of self-development behaviors: engaging in stretch assignments, self-reflection and self-awareness, and learning from others. Arguably, the most important strategy for leader self-development is seeking out and engaging in challenging leadership experiences on a routine basis. Referred to as "stretch assignments" (McCauley, Eastman, & Ohlott, 1995), self-developing leaders accept and pursue leadership challenges that push them beyond their natural comfort levels. Such leadership challenges need not be limited to one's occupation, but rather may be even more influential when existing outside the leader's specific job domain. Leadership experience is a key ingredient for the occurrence of learning and development.

Engaging in leadership challenges is an important and necessary first step in leader self-development, yet it is also essential that the leader reflects on the meaningfulness of such experiences. Two leaders experiencing the same leadership challenge may come away with vastly different perspectives as one may learn and develop competencies and skills from the experience while the other does not. Ellis, Mendel, and Nir (2006) suggest that whether the experience was a success or failure, self-reflection is essential to development. Reflection allows the leader to make sense out of his or her experience and apply what is learned in the future. Therefore, leader self-development behavior involves conducting self-assessments of one's preferences, strengths, and

areas for improvement. The result of such reflection is an increase in self-awareness, which is essential for leader self-development (see also Parry, 1998 for a review).

Lastly, leader self-development is maximized when the leader learns from the individuals in his or her environment, including other leaders, mentors, peers, and followers. In addition to learning from trial-and-error experiences, leaders can also learn socially through observation of effective and ineffective leaders around him or her. Furthermore, leader self-development is most effective when the leader is provided strong social support, especially from significant others, peers, and family members. For example, finding and working with a mentor, including step-ahead and peer mentors, can aid in a leader's development.

2.1.3. Leader self-development process

As important as the individual characteristics and behaviors related to self-development are the psychological processes that accompany leader self-development. Specifically, leaders must become motivated to develop their leadership capability. In general, motivation to develop refers to the desire to learn the content of training and development activities (Noe & Wilk, 1993). More specifically, motivation to develop leadership capability is defined as “the desire to develop or improve leadership skills and attributes through effort” (Maurer & Lippstreu, 2005, p. 5). Not only has it been shown to be related to learning and completion of formal training (Baldwin, Magjuka, & Loher, 1991), but motivation to develop has also been shown to be a significant, unique predictor of both development activity (Noe & Wilk, 1993) and participation in leader development activities such as leadership training (Maurer & Lippstreu, 2005).

Motivation to develop leadership capability can be distinguished from motivation to lead. Motivation to lead was defined by Chan and Drasgow (2001, p. 482) as “an individual differences construct that affects a leader's or leader-to-be's decisions to assume leadership training, roles, and responsibilities and that affect his or her intensity of effort at leading and persistence as a leader.” In their model, Chan and Drasgow portrayed motivation to lead as an immediate precursor to participation in both leadership roles and leadership training. However, while it is conceivable that a person may be both motivated to lead and develop leadership, it is equally plausible that an individual would be solely motivated to lead or solely motivated to develop. For example, a leader may perceive him/herself to already possess the necessary qualities of an excellent leader and therefore does not see any need to develop his/her leadership capacities, despite motivation to engage in leadership roles. On the other hand, an individual may be motivated to develop into a better leader because of the self-perception of the need for acquiring leadership skills before engaging in leadership behaviors/positions. Therefore, motivation to lead and motivation to develop leadership are related, but distinct, concepts with motivation to develop leadership having particularly important implications for leader self-development.

In sum, a leader with high motivation to develop expends large amounts of energy on development and persists in the face of failure. Reichard (2006) found that motivation to develop leadership was the best predictor of the quality of leader development self-set goals in terms of challenge and specificity. Therefore, we expect motivation to develop to result in higher levels of participation in self-development behavior.

Proposition 2. *Leader motivation to develop leadership will predict the extent to which leaders participate in self-development behaviors.*

3. Levels of analysis

The linkages in the current model of leader self-development as organizational strategy inherently cross multiple levels of analysis as well as multiple levels of the organization. Over the last decade, organizational researchers have been urged to “think multilevel” by specifying relationships between constructs at two or more levels of analysis (Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). Identifying the appropriate level of analysis for a given research effort is a topic of great interest to organizational and leadership scholars (e.g., Avolio & Bass, 1995; Dansereau, Yammarino, & Markham, 1995; Klein, Tosi, & Cannella, 1999; Yammarino, Dionne, Chun, & Dansereau, 2005), and has been suggested as critical to the advancement of the study of organizations (Avolio & Yammarino, 1990; Waldman & Yammarino, 1999).

While knowledge and interest in multiple levels of analysis are growing, recent leadership research has failed to incorporate a levels framework. Yammarino et al. (2005) conducted a comprehensive, qualitative, narrative review of the last ten years of leadership research that included 348 conceptual and empirical publications from major leadership, management, and psychological periodicals and books. Of these, fewer than 30% explicitly addressed levels of analysis issues. Furthermore, Yammarino et al. (2005) found that all four of the conceptual papers on self-management and self-leadership specifically addressed the appropriate level of analysis while neither of the two empirical studies on the topic explicitly discussed levels of analysis or used multilevel analysis techniques. Given the importance of the levels of theory, the level of analysis of the constructs described in this theory of leader self-development as organizational strategy was explicitly specified.

Given the “self” in *self-leadership*, *self-management*, and *leader self-development*, one may assume these to be individual level phenomena. On the contrary, Markham and Markham (1995) clearly described the importance of conceptualizing self-leadership and self-management using a level of analysis perspective. Specifically, they discussed the importance of multilevel relationships such as the fit between organizational culture and self-management practices; the role of superleadership (Manz & Sims, 1991), which refers to the direct supervisors influence on the self-management of employees; and the existence of group norms that support self-management. Similarly, we argue that a number of organizational and group levels of analysis variables can support or impede the individual level leader self-development process.

Because organizational level, or the point at the organizational hierarchy where leadership occurs, also plays an important role in leader self-development; we discuss leadership at three levels of the organization – top level leadership, mid-level leadership, and low level leadership. The strategic leadership team is at the highest level of the hierarchy. The role of the strategic leadership team is to provide

the organizational conditions needed to enhance self-development behavior of all leaders in the organization. At the mid-level of the organization, we discuss the leadership style of the direct supervisor of the targeted leader. Specifically, we argue that direct supervisor support mediates the impact of the organizational level variables on the individual level leader self-development process. To clarify, we do not specifically address the development of strategic leaders or mid-level leaders themselves, *per se*, but instead focuses on the impact of the organizational strategy established and support for development given by these leaders on individual level leader self-development.

3.1. Organization level influences: Strategy

Embedded within an organization, is its strategic leadership team and the organizational strategy which that team directs. The strategic leadership of an organization, who can be distinguished from other organizational leaders in terms of their position in the organization and their influence and responsibilities, includes the top management team and at times the CEO. According to Senge (1992) strategic leaders have three main tasks. First, they must build a foundation of purpose and core values for the organization. Second, strategic leaders should develop the policies, strategies, and structures that transform the guiding ideas into business initiatives. This idea is in sync with a basic premise of strategic HR management which states that different organizational strategies require different HR practices (Delery & Doty, 1996). Third, they must create effective learning processes through which the policies, strategies, and structures can be continuously improved (Jackson, 2000). Strategic leaders are those who align the organization's principles and practices and are assigned the task of balancing the needs of a broad set of multiple constituencies (e.g., stockholders, employees, and communities). As opposed to leaders at mid-levels of the organization, who often have a direct influence on their followers, strategic leaders rely on indirect influences to guide constituents toward idealized objectives across time. Strategic leadership involves formulation, implementation, and execution of organizational strategy. While the strategic leadership of an organization can occur at the individual (e.g., CEO) or group (e.g., board, leadership team, and top management team) level of analysis, the organizational strategy itself exists at the organization level of analysis.

Strategic leaders must establish leader self-development as an organizational strategy if deemed appropriate and then align the leader self-development strategy with the organizational processes and available resources. A key assumption of this model is that leader self-development behavior leads to important business outcomes (e.g., adaptability, performance). Strategic initiatives must focus on the critical factors that result in competitive advantage for the organization. The success of leader self-development as organizational strategy may be contingent upon the organizational culture within which the strategy is embedded. Therefore, it is necessary for the strategic leadership to determine if leader self-development is one of the core strengths of the organization. As Michaelson (2001) suggests, "the ultimate success of the organization is dependent on the inspiration and leadership of the executive at the highest level. Using the authority the position commands, the senior leader can set in motion a chain of events that will cascade changes throughout the entire organization" (p. 33). Without such top management support, strategic initiatives often fail. Because of the key role of strategic leadership in setting the direction of the organizational systems, the following proposition was put forth.

Proposition 3. *Organizational strategy has a positive and direct impact on the organizational level of analysis constructs of human resources processes (selection, training, and performance appraisal) and resources available (informational technology, direct supervisor leadership style, and social networks) to support leader self-development.*

3.2. Group level influences

3.2.1. HR processes and group level norms

The organizational strategy put in place influences group norms through HR processes. Specifically, the HR processes of selection, training, and performance appraisal influence group norms by informing leaders how to behave and by modeling, teaching, and rewarding appropriate behavior. Norms refer to the formal and informal rules that emerge and shape patterns of interaction and are conceptualized at the group level of analysis. As discussed below, key norms resulting from leader self-development as organizational strategy and supporting motivation to develop and leader self-development include (1) learning, (2) responsibility, and (3) openness. Together, these norms support self-development by reinforcing a learning culture in the organization and setting the expectation of accountability for one's own development through the desire to seek out new experiences.

The selection system is the leader's first exposure to what is expected in the organization. By using selection criteria that are focused on leader self-development (developmental readiness), the organization is modeling self-development norms. More specifically, when applicants are asked about their learning goal orientation, conscientiousness, and openness, as part of the selection criteria, they can infer that learning, responsibility, and openness are important norms for the organization. Similarly, mandatory training practices, including meta-cognitive skills, needs analysis, goal setting, self-management, and progress evaluation provide target leaders with the cues that learning is their personal responsibility. The institutionalization of such practices also stresses the importance of openness and learning. In essence, selection and training provide the leader with self-development skills and model the behavioral norms that are appropriate and expected of the leader.

Finally, but perhaps most importantly, the performance appraisal system should reward self-development and thereby crystallize the self-development norms. The performance appraisal system can emphasize the importance of specific leadership behaviors by linking these expected behaviors to their financial compensation. Changes in leader self-development behavior will be continuous to the extent that the performance appraisal evaluates, reinforces, and rewards self-development behavior (Avolio, 2004). Therefore, organizational strategy of leader self-development impacts workgroup norms through the HR processes put in place.

Proposition 4. *The organizational level HR processes of selection (developmental readiness), training (meta-cognitive skills, needs analysis, goal setting, self-management, and progress evaluation), and performance appraisal (360-degree feedback followed by setting developmental goals) mediate the relationship between organizational strategy and group level norms (learning, responsibility, and openness). Organizational strategy impacts group norms through HR processes.*

3.2.2. HR processes and leader characteristics

In addition to its effects on group norms, we expect that organizational strategy has the potential to influence leader characteristics through the organization's HR practices. As previously discussed, the most influential HR processes focus on selection, training, and performance appraisal to equip leaders with necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities required for effective leader self-development. Stable traits, such as conscientiousness and intelligence, should be targeted through the selection process to insure that leaders in the organization have a higher propensity to self-develop. Avolio (2004) referred to this propensity as developmental readiness, which he conceptualized as a function of the leader's self-perceptions and other challenges competing for the leader's attention. By first selecting those leaders with a propensity to self-develop (Boyce et al., 2007; Cortina & Zaccaro, 2003; Cortina et al., 2004), the organization is preparing for successful implementation of leader self-development as organizational strategy. Therefore, selection criteria should be based on those stable traits that increase the leader's propensity to become an effective self-developer.

Developable leader characteristics, such as goal setting, self-regulation, and meta-cognitive skills should be targeted through the organization's training programs. Stansfield highlights the potential effectiveness of reflective learning and journaling as methods leaders can utilize to reflect on his or her thinking, feeling, and doing (Suar, 2001). More specifically, leaders can be trained to reflect when a learning opportunity arises, a process referred to as "reflection in action" (Avolio, 2004; Schon, 1987). Other self-development strategies that can be trained include periodic competency mapping, keeping up with technology and trends in the field, reading and writing, mind-stilling exercises, and self-persuasion exercises (Suar, 2001). Yet, the same methods cannot be employed across all circumstances by all leaders (Michaelson, 2001). Garrison (1997) pointed out that leaders will not succeed and persist in their learning without a variety of strategies and skills. Therefore, multiple strategies may help leaders become more resilient learners, a positive psychological capacity that arguably can be developed through training (Luthans, Vogelgesang, & Lester, 2006).

Third, the performance appraisal system must support leader self-development. Murphy and Young (1996) suggest that the process of leader self-development moves from awareness of strengths and weaknesses, to the creation of a plan to address them, to a final evaluation of the learning outcomes. Performance appraisal systems that focus solely on performance outcomes may not be conducive to measuring self-development because learning is ignored. Instead, the performance appraisal system should integrate both performance and learning outcomes and processes. Take for example the identification of "communication" as an important criterion in performance appraisal. Within this single dimension both learning and performance outcomes and processes should be assessed and combined to form the overall composite of the communication evaluation. A performance outcome may be peer ratings of communication behavior. A learning process outcome may be the facilitation of group discussions as part of involvement in the local Parent-Teacher Association or Toastmasters club.

Performance appraisals that include 360-degree feedback assessments provide target leaders a foundation on which they can set developmental goals (Atwater & Waldman, 1998; Brutus, London, & Martineau, 1999; Yammarino & Atwater, 1997). This type of performance appraisal includes feedback from the target leader's supervisor, peers, and followers and self-ratings on important dimensions of leadership. Dimensions should be determined by the respective organization; however, some examples include motivating, developing, building, teamwork, and learning (ARI, 2003). Supporting the use of 360 degree feedback, Noe and Wilk (1993) found little convergence between different measures of development activity. They concluded that data from personnel files may not be the most objective source and that there is a need to collect information regarding development activity from different sources. Research has shown that leaders use 360-degree feedback strategically by setting developmental goals focused on those dimensions rated as low (Brutus et al., 1999). A performance appraisal system incorporating leader self-development is predicted to result in the expansion of leader self-development capacities.

Given the importance of selection, training, and performance appraisal, we propose that organizational strategy impacts individual level leader characteristics required for leader self-development through these organizational level HR processes.

Proposition 5. *The organizational level HR processes of selection (developmental readiness), training (meta-cognitive skills, needs analysis, goal setting, self-management, and progress evaluation), and performance appraisal (360-degree feedback followed by setting developmental goals) mediate the relationship between organizational strategy and individual level leader characteristics. Organizational strategy has an indirect positive impact on individual leader characteristics through its effect on HR processes.*

Proposition 6. *The group level variable of norms moderates the relationship between individual level leader characteristics and leader engagement. Leader characteristics (developmental readiness) have a stronger positive effect on motivation to develop, when group norms (learning, responsibility, and openness) support leader self-development.*

3.2.3. Organizational resources and leader behavior

If the target leader is motivated to develop, the leader is likely to exhibit continuous self-development behavior when organizational resources are available. Michaelson (2001) explains that when implementing a strategy, "you must apply full resources to the effort. We need to be efficient, but not at the expense of the resources needed to achieve success" (p. 100). The most important organizational resources include technology, direct supervisor leadership style, and social networks. Not

discussed due to limited space are other organizational resources that may aid leader self-development such as extra-organizational learning resources such as professional conferences, workshops and continuing education.

First, technology can play an important role in converting the leader's engagement in learning into actual self-development behavior. Technology can refer to information technology, such as the Internet or Intranet. For example, in the U.S. Army, leaders have access to a website (www.companycommand.com), which supplies an abundance of information and links to other sites with information about leadership. Technology can also refer to the availability of accelerated training programs geared toward various aspects of leader behavior. For example, the leader may be motivated to learn about transformational leadership; however, the leader's ability to actually develop transformational leadership behaviors will depend on the availability of quality technology. If the available technology related to transformational leadership is outdated, then despite the leader's motivation to develop, the leader's development will be limited. If utilized properly, technology can augment and accelerate leader self-development.

Second, the target leader's direct supervisor should also be a prime factor in development (Birdi, Allan, & Warr, 1997; Maurer & Tarulli, 1994). We propose that the leadership style of the one's direct supervisor moderates the relationship between motivation to develop and self-development behavior. When the supervisor supports the leader's self-development, self-development behavior is more likely to occur and to occur continuously. In a study of learner-controlled training, Bell and Kozlowski (2002) found that adaptive guidance had a substantial effect on the nature of trainees' study and practice, self-regulation, knowledge acquired, and performance. Additionally, London (1993) found that leader career motivation was associated with the support and empowerment received from the direct supervisor. Finally, Noe and Wilk (1993) found that social support from the direct supervisor (and peers) for development activity positively influenced development activity.

Furthermore, longitudinal research on transformational leadership has shown that leaders trained in this leadership style had a more positive impact on direct follower's development than those in a control group (Dvir, Eden, Avolio, & Shamir, 2002). Direct supervisors high in individualized consideration, one component of transformational leadership, go beyond understanding and satisfying the leader's needs and expectations to challenging and motivating the leader to perform at a higher level (Avolio, 2004). Bass and Avolio (1990) stated that transformational leaders empower followers to think on their own, come up with new ideas, and question unneeded rules. The target leader needs the support of the direct supervisor to implement leader self-development. (Garrison, 1997). Because self-development involves setting goals that are relevant and meaningful, establishing cognitive strategies to enable development, and taking opportunities to question accepted beliefs (Garrison, 1997), the target leader's direct supervisor can provide this support by meeting frequently with the leader to negotiate and evaluate progress toward developmental goals. A supportive supervisor with a transformational leadership style enables the leader to actualize self-development behavior.

Because meaning and knowledge are both personally and socially constructed (Garrison, 1997), a third resource that can assist in continuous leader self-development is the richness of the target leader's social networks. Social networks refer to the formal and informal linkages of relationships between individuals within and outside the organization. The direct supervisor can leverage the target leader's social networks and thereby indirectly impact the target leader's self-development. Through role-modeling and continuous reinforcement, the direct supervisor can develop peers of the target leader creating a climate emphasizing the leader's development (Avolio, 2004).

Learning is a highly interpersonal experience often carried out through a formal network of professional advisors, informal business contacts, or an informal network of friends (Murphy & Young, 1995). A formal network can be established through a non-evaluative 360-degree performance appraisal that initiates dialogue among the target leader and his or her formal relationships in the organization (e.g., supervisor, peers, and subordinates). Other examples of formal networks include formal mentoring programs and professional organizational affiliations. Informal networks, which develop over time through interactions with others focusing on people rather than things, can also be supportive of leader self-development. Leaders rely heavily on others in their personal and professional networks to obtain information, support, or advice (Murphy & Young, 1995). By creating opportunities for interaction among target leaders, supervisors can leverage informal social networks to increase leader self-development. Learning may be a result of indirect processes (i.e., casual discussions) or direct processes (i.e., posing questions) (Murphy & Young, 1995). Leaders learn by talking about leadership with other leaders in an informal, non-evaluative setting. Day, Gronn, and Salas (2004) discussed the possibility of 'team learning' to build the leadership capacity within a team. Coaching or mentoring may provide the type of feedback that is especially helpful for learning through providing advice on how to make sense of complicated interpersonal situations or by allowing the self-developing leader to see the benefit of his or her social networks in a broader context (Day & Lance, 2001; Ensher & Murphy, 2005).

While the basic tenets of self-development state that the individual leader is in control of his or her own development, learning does not occur in a vacuum. While other organizational resources may also be important, due to limited space, we focused here on technology, group level or dyadic level influence of the direct supervisor leadership style, and the group level phenomena of social networks, which we argue each play a significant role in moving an engaged leader into a continuous self-developer.

Proposition 7. *Organizational resources moderate the relationship between motivation to develop and leader self-development behavior. Motivation to develop has a stronger positive impact on self-development behavior when resources (technology, direct supervisor leadership style, and social networks) support leader self-development.*

4. Discussion

In this paper, a clear definition of what constitutes leader self-development was presented and differentiated from self-management/self-leadership. While giving special attention to levels of analysis issues, we proposed a multi-level model of leader self-development which incorporates both organizational level (strategy, HR processes, and resources) and group level (norms,

direct supervisor leadership style, and social networks) phenomena. It is our belief that such a multi-level model provides a helpful tool in predicting and implementing leader self-development as organizational strategy.

We have stressed the key role of strategic leaders in creating conditions necessary for leaders to engage in and benefit from continuous self-development behavior. Strategic leaders can use the framework presented in this research to help identify and align points of leverage within the organization when implementing such a strategy. As mentioned, it is important for strategic leaders to have an accurate picture of the current organizational culture (i.e., institutionalized policies, processes and structures) and how it supports or hinders the realization of a leader self-development strategy. It is also important to note that when a self-development strategy is implemented, this does not imply that development occurs in isolation, and left completely to the individual leaders in the organization. The success of a leader self-development organizational strategy requires an organizational wide effort. While the target leader determines the how, what, where, and when of development, the strategic leaders play a key role in implementing the appropriate HR processes, norms, and resources necessary to support the said development.

Strategic leaders can impact leader self-development by making available important technological and learning resources. For example, leadership libraries including various forms of media are one resource that strategic leaders can provide to promote the development of leader self-development. Videos, books, books on tape, CD-ROMs, DVDs, and internet sources should be available on a wide variety of leadership areas. In this way, the leader can determine their personal how, what, where, and when to learn. Social networks and technology can be combined to further aid leader self-development. For example, the Army website (www.companycommand.com) utilizes interactive discussion boards and chat rooms to help leaders meet and interact with other leaders on-line to discuss leadership experiences and form social networks. When a leader faces a particular leadership challenge, he/she can log-on to the website and post a message soliciting advice from other leaders. This open dialogue between leaders changes the quality of interactions that leaders have with their peers and supervisors and provides a prime way in which leaders can engage in self-development that can be reinforced and sustained over time.

4.1. Future research

Future research should extend this model to include outcomes of leader self-development behavior at multiple levels of analysis. As previously defined, leader self-development behavior refers to any self-initiated or self-structured developmental behavior focused on developing leadership capabilities. According to Chinese strategist Sun Tzu, “No plan can see beyond the first engagement. Although it is important to follow the plan, it is equally important to know when and how to modify the plan” (Michaelson, 2001, p. 70). Although not included in the current model, we believe that both adaptability and flexibility are important individual level outcomes of leader self-development behavior. Adaptability is defined as a functional change in response to altered environmental and situational contingencies (Zaccaro & Banks, 2003). Flexibility is composed of cognitive flexibility, social flexibility, and a flexibly-oriented disposition. Through leader self-development, the leader is able to react to a changing environment by quickly developing the necessary knowledge and skills. Because all leaders' needs are different, the strategy of leader self-development allows the flexibility of each individual leader to adapt as necessary. Adaptability and flexibility result in the leader's and organization's long-term and continuous performance impact. Future research should consider the individual level outcomes of adaptability and flexibility.

Furthermore, going back to Day's (2000) distinction between leader and leadership development, the individual leader development outcome of adaptability may become, in turn, a important organizational leadership development outcome as well. In other words, adaptability can also be conceptualized at the organizational level. When an organization promotes leader self-development as organizational strategy, the organization itself should be more capable of adapting to environmental changes. Absorptive capacity could also be assessed as an organizational outcome of the leader self-development model (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001). Absorptive capacity refers to the organization's ability to learn. Boal and Hooijberg (2001, p. 517) stated that it “involves processes used offensively and defensively to improve fits between the organization and its environment.” In essence, this is the ultimate criterion of the proposed model. Can an organization adapt and thrive in the turbulent global environment? Future research should examine the veracity of this claim.

The model presented in this paper utilizes a conceptually theoretical approach to understanding how organizational and group factors influence individual level leader self-development. This model must be evaluated empirically to support the propositions supported by theory. The first step in empirical verification is accurate operationalization of constructs. More specifically, future research needs to contribute to the valid measurement of leader self-development behavior. As Yammarino et al. (2005) emphasized, it is essential that measures reflect the multilevel nature of the constructs discussed in this paper at the organizational, group, and individual levels of analysis in operationalization, measurement, analyses, and interpretation. Data techniques, including hierarchical linear modeling are prime statistical tools for analyzing cross-level models such as the one presented here (Bliese, Halverson, & Schriesheim, 2002; Castro, 2002; Gavin & Hofmann, 2002). Other important areas for future research include testing the validity of the selection battery for self-development propensity, developing self-development strategies from an in-depth qualitative study, and testing the relative effectiveness of those strategies through a training intervention study.

5. Conclusion

Implementing an organizational strategy that promotes leader self-development may pay financial, attitudinal, and relational dividends to the organization over time. Pfeffer (1994) demonstrated the positive financial impact for organizations that pay special attention to monitoring the effectiveness of their management practices. By creating an organizational strategy which

supports leader self-development, return on investments previously spent on managerial training may increase exponentially. The advantages behind leader self-development mirror the saying: 'Give a man a fish, you feed him for a day; Teach a man to fish, you feed him for a lifetime.' Applied to leader development, when you send a leader to a specific type of training, for example, communication training, the leader learns how to communicate. However, if one can teach a leader how to self-develop and provide an organizational environment supportive of self-development, the leader will then be able to continuously develop over a lifetime and in a variety of areas, resulting in a long-term sustainable growth strategy. Therefore, not only should we teach the man how to fish, but we must also provide him with an environment conducive to fishing. To maximize dollars spent on leadership development, instead of focusing leader development programs on a certain competency, the organizational strategy should focus on improving and supporting leader self-development.

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