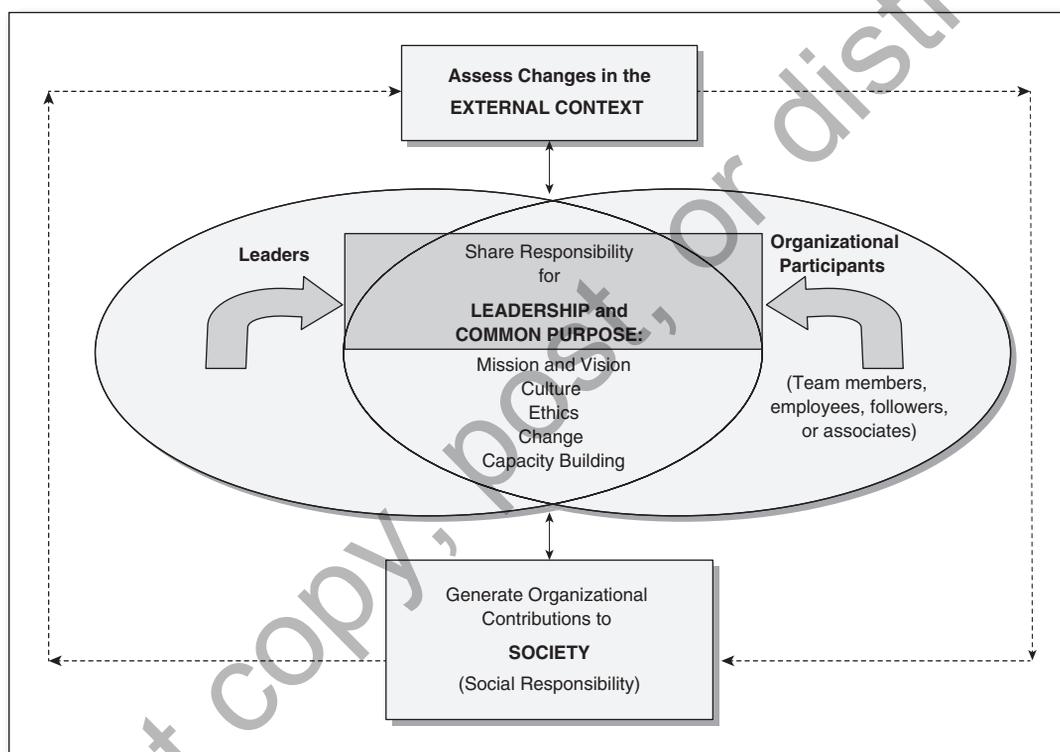


## PART III

# Shared or Collective Leadership



### Overview

A primary assumption underlying this book is that new era organizations can become better able to meet the challenges of their complex and rapidly changing environment through shared or collective responsibility for leadership. Shared leadership in various forms from self-led teams to democratic workplaces is gaining momentum in leadership research and practice, though it is not presently as pervasive as more predominant forms of leadership. In the words

of Zander, Mockaitis, and Butler (discussed later in this section), these new forms are “surfacing more quickly than scholars are able to study them; research on global and virtual team leadership, in particular, is lagging behind.” This research–practice gap is one of the main challenges for current and future research on shared leadership.

The chapters in Part III present concepts, theories, and research that contribute to the developing area of shared or collective leadership. Together organization members generate and commit to the

organization's common purpose and cultivate its leadership. With the common purpose and leadership framework intact, leaders and members share responsibilities for the organization's mission and vision, culture, ethics, change, capacity building, and contributions to society.

Gill Hickman and Georgia Sorenson (Chapter 12) present a shared leadership concept called *invisible leadership* where the impetus and motivation for leadership originate from the common purpose. Invisible leadership embodies situations in which dedication to a compelling and deeply held common purpose is the motivating force for leadership. Individuals willingly use their strengths in leader or follower roles and cultivate a strong shared bond that connects participants to each other in pursuit of their purpose.

The researchers stress that purpose is more than a mission statement. It is a deeply held sense of common destiny, a life course or calling; it is aligned with a mission but resonates profoundly with people's values and their sense of themselves. It binds people together and is the reason for their shared leadership. The common purpose is often the reason people are attracted to the work of an organization; and often the reason they stay. This invisible force is the space where inspiration, interactions, and connections between the purpose and its leaders and followers ignite to bring about something extraordinary. Hickman and Sorenson refer to this phenomenon as *charisma of purpose*.

The question underlying this research was, "Can a common purpose actually inspire leadership?" To answer this question, the researchers surveyed members of 21 democratic companies and nonprofit organizations. They used an eight factor scale consisting of self-selection/attraction; commitment to or ownership of the purpose; influence/inspiration to contribute; bond among participants; self-agency; taking action (leadership) visibly or invisibly; rising above self-interest; and taking advantage of or utilizing opportunities and resources. Though the data are not reported in this chapter of their book, the researchers found the vast majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed—they were committed to achieving their organization's common purpose; they

accepted the common purpose as their own; the common purpose inspired them to contribute their best work; they formed a strong bond or relationship among employees by working together on behalf of the common purpose; they were willing to work in either a leader or team member role to accomplish the common purpose; and they believed they had the power to act (lead) on behalf of the organization's common purpose.

Christina L. Wassenaar and Craig L. Pearce (Chapter 13) describe the shift from hierarchical to shared leadership as moving the role of leadership from one person's hand to the arms of the group as they work together toward their common objectives. They define shared leadership as "a dynamic interactive influence process among individuals in groups for which the object is to lead one another to the achievement of group or organizational goals or both."

Wassenaar and Pearce provide a historical base for shared leadership that incorporates Follett's law of the situation (follow the person in the group with the most knowledge of the situation); Hollander's leadership emergence (leaders emerge from or are selected by the group); leadership substitutes (processes or procedures that can substitute for a hierarchical leader); Manz and Sims' self-leadership (groups lead themselves without formal leaders); and empowerment (delegation of power from the top level to individuals who are responsible for the day-to-day work).

Studies to date have researched the antecedents and outcomes of shared leadership. Several antecedents were found to enable shared leadership: facilitating forces and actions of hierarchical or vertical leaders; enabling support structures such as technology, team training, and coaching; conducive organizational culture and group empowerment; relationship longevity; flow, especially in creative groups; and proximity. Studies found outcomes of shared leadership at the individual, group, and organizational levels. Individual outcomes associated with shared leadership entail individual satisfaction, self-efficacy, and mimetic effect, which means as people learned shared leadership from others, they mimetic those behaviors in their units. Group-level outcomes include cognitive advantages (team confidence and

potency, motivation, social integration, group cohesion, and group empowerment); behavioral outcomes (team citizenship and networking behavior, constructive interaction, swift coordination of activities, reliability, information exchange, and intercultural fit); and group/team effectiveness and performance. Organization-level outcomes in one study demonstrated that shared leadership in multiple firms predicted the companies' financial performance. In another study, the company demonstrated increased revenues, reduced turnover, and substantially higher numbers of job applications.

Increasingly, scholars and practitioners are beginning to view leadership as a process that can be shared, distributed, and acted on collectively. Consistent with other authors in this section, Wassenaar and Pearce acknowledge the need for considerably more research in this area and better understanding of the methods used to measure shared leadership.

One rapidly developing form of shared leadership is e-leadership. Bruce Avolio, John Sosik, Surinder Kahai, and Bradford Baker (Chapter 14) review the research on e-leadership more than a decade after Avolio, Kahai, and Dodge's 2001 article on the same topic. The aim of their review is to examine how advanced information technology (AIT) and leadership interact and how their interaction affects individuals, groups, organizations, and communities. Their updated definition describes e-leadership as "a social influence process embedded in both proximal and distal contexts mediated by AIT that can produce a change in attitudes, feelings, thinking, behavior and performance."

The researchers stress that AIT is transforming the way people work, and it is actually transforming organizations. They examine the positive and negative aspects of several distinct changes in the workplace: the increasing use of AIT in organizations; greater transparency and openness; the rise of social networks; constant contact between and among organization members; and increased use of tracking devices.

There has been increased interest in the emerging concept of e-leadership but insufficient understanding of and research on the effect of technologies on leadership. Avolio, Sosik, Kahai, and Baker draw

several conclusions based on their review of the leadership literature.

- The gap between the practice and implementation of AIT and what we know about its effects has grown over the last decade.
- Opportunities to examine how AIT can completely transform the way leaders are developed is barely mentioned in leadership literature, but information is beginning to appear on the use of technology to support leadership development such as online learning or development tools.
- There are many ethical issues that need to be addressed regarding how applications of the technology should and should not be used in e-leadership.
- There has been relatively little in the leadership literature on how leadership styles and orientations interact with some of the latest AIT.
- There has been relatively little attention paid to the impact of social, cultural, and physical distance that is mediated in e-leadership.
- Researchers need to examine leadership within and across all organizational levels based on the new connections made possible with AIT—including leading peer-to-peer and leading up management levels.
- How organizations are structured in the future, and how they change and transform will no doubt be affected by the appropriation of AIT.

Based on the authors' findings, much more research is needed in the vital area of e-leadership. They contend that "it may be time to totally rethink what constitutes an organization and in turn, its leadership."

Complexity leadership generates shared processes by allowing leadership to emerge from various parts of the organization in response to arising situations and needs. Mary Uhl-Bien and Russ Marion (Chapter 15) explain that complexity theory developed as organizations moved from static equilibrium to dynamic equilibrium models in response to a context of dynamic and continual changes. "Complexity leadership theory

is the study of leadership based in complexity science.” According to Wheatley’s 1992 concept, complexity theory presumes leadership emerges from interactions and relationships among people in the organization in response to nonlinear, emergent changes and situations in the organization and its environmental context. Leadership in this setting is more fluid, responsive, and creative, more suited to the knowledge era. It enables new and creative solutions to arise from members of the organizations through interactions among people in formal and informal networks.

“Knowledge era organizations are poised at the ‘edge of chaos’ that exists between order and disorder, stability and instability—continuously changing, rather than giving in to equilibrium, stability-seeking tendencies.” Organizations in this context operate as complex adaptive systems ready to engage people in newly emerging changes and opportunities. Uhl-Bien and Marion identify three leadership functions in these organizations: administrative functions that drive business results; adaptive functions that drive innovation (product innovation) and adaptability (process innovation); and enabling functions that operate in the interface between administrative and adaptive functions to loosen administrative systems and allow adaptive leadership to surface and advance.

Lena Zander, Audra Mockaitis, and Christina Butler (Chapter 16) discuss the current literature on global teams. Global teams are distinguished by their “national, cultural and linguistic heterogeneity and operate in a globally dispersed virtual environment.” These teams differ from other teams on two dimensions: globally dispersed work environment and heterogeneity on multiple dimensions. They are multicultural in composition and virtual in action; consequently, they cross two literature streams: multicultural team research and virtual team research.

The authors review recent work on virtual team leadership, multicultural team leadership, and the team leader. Several themes for future research emerge from their review: global team leaders as boundary spanners, bridge makers, and blenders; people-oriented leadership in global teams; and leveraging global team diversity. Zander, Mockaitis, and Butler raise the compelling question, “What will

change when a multicultural team leader has to work virtually and correspondingly when a virtual team leader faces a multicultural team?” Researchers will need to investigate how global leaders enact multiple roles that involve engaging in boundary spanning between organizational units, bridging cultural and linguistic differences among team members, and blending or uniting subgroups in the team. Future research will need to explore whether people-oriented leadership (or another form) is feasible, effective, and successful in virtual, multicultural, global teams where members hold differing mental models and expectations of leadership. Finally, research studies will need to examine how these leaders can bring out the best qualities of diverse team members, in other words, leverage diversity in a virtual context.

Workplace or organizational democracy is one area of shared leadership where practice seems to be outpacing research. Traci Fenton (Chapter 17) discusses the advantages of organizational democracy in large, medium, and small companies around the world, including Zappos, Hulu, DaVita, HCL Technologies, WD-40, Brainpark, Great Harvest Bread Company, NixonMcInnes, among others. She explains that “decisions are made throughout the organization by those who have the most knowledge or will be most impacted by the decision, not just by those in the C-suite.” These organizations practice 10 principles of organizational democracy: purpose + vision; transparency; dialogue + listening; fairness + dignity; accountability; individual + collective; choice; integrity; decentralization; and reflection + evaluation.

The examples provided by Fenton of organizational democracy clearly illustrate Gastil’s definition in practice. Democratic leadership involves three functions: distributing responsibility among the membership, empowering group members, and aiding the group’s decision-making process.<sup>1</sup> Most members of the group perform these functions and exchange leader and follower roles often. Workplace democracy does not mean there are no leaders. Instead, organizations become stronger because leadership is distributed throughout. These organizations

experience improvements in the bottom line while becoming more efficient and productive, increasing innovation, attracting and retaining top talent, lowering absenteeism, and providing superior customer service.

## Note

1. Gastil, J. (1994). A definition and illustration of democratic leadership. *Human Relations*, 47(8), 953–975.

## Part III — Chapters

12. Unmasking Leadership  
*Gill R. Hickman and Georgia J. Sorenson*
13. The Nature of Shared Leadership *Christina L. Wassenaar and Craig L. Pearce*
14. E-Leadership: Re-Examining Transformations in Leadership Source and Transmission  
*Bruce J. Avolio, John J. Sosik, Surinder S. Kahai, and Bradford Baker*
15. Complexity Leadership Theory  
*Mary Uhl-Bien and Russ Marion*
16. Leading Global Teams  
*Lena Zander, Audra I. Mockaitis, and Christina L. Butler*
17. Inspiring Democracy in the Workplace: From Fear-Based to Freedom-Centered Organizations  
*Traci L. Fenton*