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Developing Leaders and Leadership: Perspectives from Science and Practice

College of Organisational Psychologists WA
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Leader Development: State of the Field

- Improving or leveraging talent a top business priority (75%)
- Estimate that **\$45B per year in US alone** invested in management development, leadership development, and executive education
- Leaders not seen as high quality
 - (6% excellent, 31% very good)
- Derailment still an issue
 - 37% of leaders fail on the job*
 - Top derailment issues: **Hubris**, insensitivity, poor interpersonal skills

Source: Howard, A., & Wellins, R. S. (2008). *Global leadership forecast 2008|2009: Overcoming the shortfalls in developing leaders*. Pittsburgh, PA: Development Dimensions International.

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Comments to Leaders

“What are you doing, idiot?”
First-level leader, financial services company, South Africa

“What *** stupid recommendations you have made! Are these the best actions you can bring to the table for discussion.”
Executive, airline, Malaysia

“You have the interpersonal skills of a gnat.”
*Executive, energy company, Australia**

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Shortfalls in Developing Leaders

- **Leaders don't get the right development**
 - Not enough opportunities to learn on the job
 - No mentoring, no developmental feedback
- **Development programs poorly executed**
 - Programs launched then left to drift
 - Inconsistent messages about importance
 - Managers don't know how to – or just don't – help their reports develop*
- **Succession management is incomplete**
 - Most organizations have no succession plan
 - Lack of help for high potential employees

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Shortfalls in Developing Leaders

“Leaders don't take personal responsibility for their own development. They wait for the organization to provide them with opportunities or give them developmental assignments.”

Director, global learning and development,
health care products company, USA

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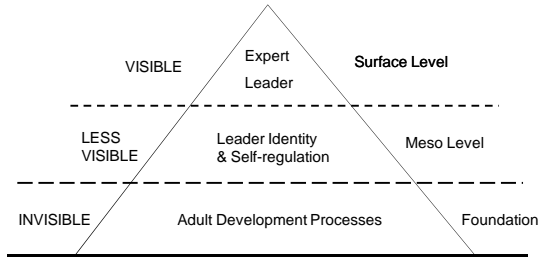
Building a Science of Leader Development

- Where is the psychological science?
- What are the psychological issues in LD?
 - Expertise and expert performance
 - Identity-development spirals
 - Adult development processes

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Levels of Leader Development



Source: Day, D. V., Harrison, M. M., & Halpin, S. M. (2009). *An integrative approach to leader development: Connecting adult development, identity, and expertise*. New York: Routledge.
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I. Developing the Expert Leader

- Leadership competencies = expertise(?)
- Role of deliberate practice
 - 10 years or 10,000 hours of intense practice
 - Involves managing motivation and external constraints
- Is this the right model?
- How does one “practice leadership?”

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I. Developing the Expert Leader: General Qualities

- Strong interest and emotional commitment to talent field
- Desire to reach a high level of performance in a talent field
- Willingness to put in great amounts of time and effort needed to reach expert performance levels
- Ability to learn rapidly and well

Bloom, B. S. (Ed.)(1985). *Developing talent in young people*. New York: Ballantine.

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I. Developing the Expert Leader

- Implications
 - Experience alone does not develop expert leaders
 - Intensive, dedicated practice over years is needed
- Related issues in expert performance:
 - Maintaining motivation
 - Managing external constraints

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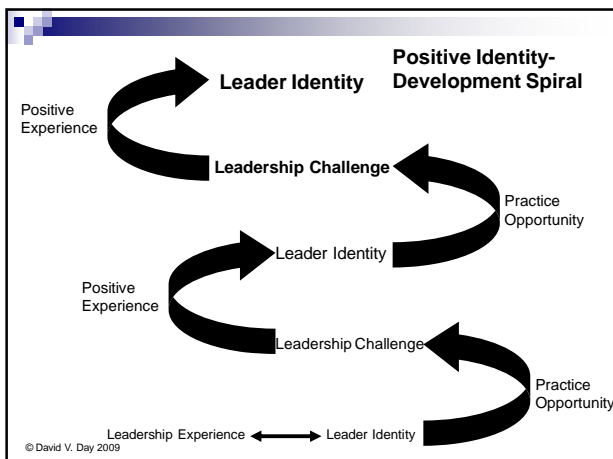


II. Leader Identity Development

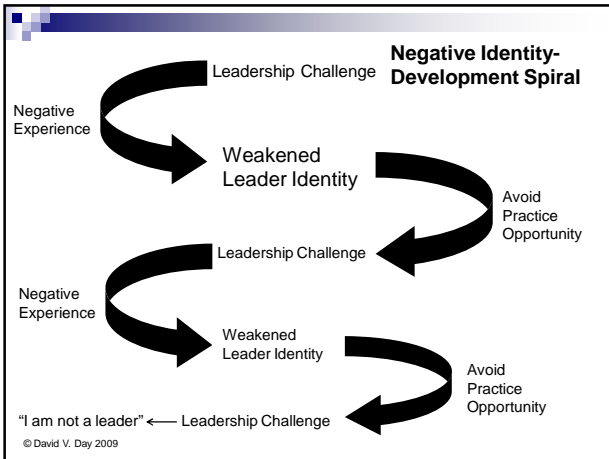
- Self concept as unifying construct
 - Vast, multidisciplinary literature
 - "Thinking is for doing"
 - How people see self shape how they perceive and relate to others
- Identity-Development Spirals
 - Identifying as leader → seek leadership challenges
 - "Rising to the challenge" → stronger leader identity

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II. Leader Identity Development

- Leader identity provides motivation for development
 - Taking on leadership challenges
 - Building leadership efficacy
 - Practicing leadership
- Critical concerns
 - Does challenge or identity come first?
 - Demonstrating reciprocal causation


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III. Leader Development as Adult Development

- LD part of ongoing Adult Development
 - Development = process of maximizing gains and minimizing losses
 - Individual resources limited
 - Orchestrating processes of AD
 - Selection (Goals/Outcomes): Elective and Loss-based
 - Optimization (Means/Resources)
 - Compensation (Response to Loss)
- SOC as framework for understanding successful lifespan development process

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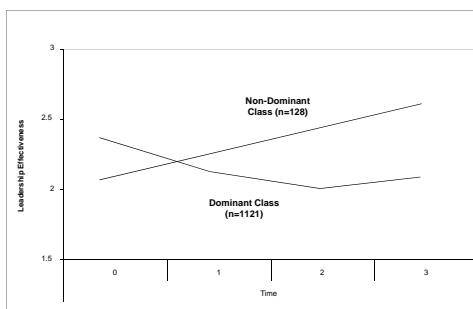
III. Leader Development as Adult Development

- Action-related approach to setting and managing life goals
- Theoretically and empirically related to individual differences in healthy aging and lifespan development
- Integrates aspects of goal-setting and managing external constraints with LD

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Fitted Leader Effectiveness Change Trajectory in Each Latent Class (Growth Mixture Modeling Results)



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Conclusions

- Psychological science has many important implications for leadership and LD
- Particular areas of scientific relevance:
 - Learning and performance
 - Identity and self-regulation
 - Development and healthy aging
- Take-away points on LD:
 - Eclectic (vs. dogmatic)
 - Integrative (vs. piecemeal)
 - Long Term and Ongoing (vs. episodic)
 - Individually Directed (vs. organizationally driven)

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