© *Academy of Management Learning & Education*, 2011, Vol. 10, No. 3, 430–450. http://dx.doi.org/10.5465/amle.2010.0032

Up Close and Personal: Building Foundations for Leaders' Development Through the Personalization of Management Learning

GIANPIERO PETRIGLIERI
INSEAD

JACK DENFELD WOOD
IMD

JENNIFER LOUISE PETRIGLIERI
Harvard University

Courses that aim to foster reflection and personal development in the service of leaders' development are increasingly popular within MBA curricula and executive education portfolios. We explore the process through which these courses enrich their institutional context and enhance students' ongoing development and practice of leadership. Through an inductive, qualitative study of the Personal Development Elective, an offering within the leadership curriculum of an international MBA that gives students the option to work with a psychotherapist, we develop a model of how the interplay between the regressive and holding features of an intensive management program foster the personalization of management learning. The personalization process, we posit, allows management education to provide the foundations for leaders' development by transforming potentially regressive experiences into material for participants' personal learning, experimentation, and growth.

Twenty-five centuries after it was engraved above the entrance to the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, the admonition to "Know Thyself" has gained prominence in management education. At the dawn of the 21st century, a special issue of the *Harvard Business Review* declared self-awareness to be "leadership's first commandment" (Collingwood, 2001: 8), and not long after, the advisory council to the Stanford Graduate School of Business deemed it the most important ability for leaders to develop (George, Sims, McLean, & Mayer, 2007). Concurrently, a burgeoning stream of academic work has drawn a link between identity development and leaders' development (Carroll & Levy, 2010; Day & Harrison, 2007; DeRue & Ashford, 2010a; Ibarra, Snook, & Guillen Ramo, 2010; Lord & Hall, 2005; Shamir & Eilam, 2005), with some even suggesting that "leader development is largely personal development. A major aspect of personal development is the process of becoming more aware of one's self" (Hall, 2004: 154). Business leaders, practitioners, and scholars seem to agree that it is time for the motto that was once central to the education

We are grateful to Henrik Bresman, Declan Fitzsimons, Robin Fryer, Jonathan Gosling, Herminia Ibarra, Janet Shaner, James Spee, and Mark Stein for their thoughtful suggestions and comments. Special Issue Coeditor Sim Sitkin and two anonymous reviewers provided invaluable guidance throughout the development of this manuscript. An earlier version of the paper received the Graduate Management Admission Council Award for the most significant contribution to graduate management education at the 2011 Academy of Management Meeting in San Antonio. The research reported here was partially funded by the IMD Research & Development Department.

Copyright of the Academy of Management, all rights reserved. Contents may not be copied, emailed, posted to a listserv, or otherwise transmitted without the copyright holder's express written permission. Users may print, download, or email articles for individual use only.

of future leaders in the open-air amphitheaters of the Greek *polis* to be taken as seriously in the indoor amphitheaters of modern business schools.

Congruent with this emerging consensus, is a growing interest in pedagogical approaches that reach into the intrapersonal domain and encourage reflection upon the ways students' personal history, idiosyncrasies, and aspirations affect their perceptions, decisions, and behavior. The aim of these approaches is to help managers outgrow limiting sensitivities (Kaiser & Kaplan, 2006), and to meet "the challenge of developing the whole person" (Boyatzis, Stubbs, & Taylor, 2002: 151; see also Hoover, Giambatista, Sorenson, & Bommer, 2010). They build on the assumption that while personal competencies, such as self-awareness and self-management, may be the hardest to measure and develop (Spencer & Spencer, 1993), they represent the foundations on which the ongoing development and successful exercise of leadership rest (Day, 2001; Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009; Hogan & Warrenfeltz, 2003; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Despite the ubiquitous language of "transformation" and "personal development" in management education brochures,[1] whether and how such development takes place in programs (such as MBA programs) that remove students from their work environments for extended periods is a matter of scholarly debate (Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002; Starkey & Tempest, 2009).

We contribute to this debate through an inductive study of the Personal Development Elective (PDE), a course embedded in the leadership curriculum of an international MBA program that offers students the opportunity to work regularly with a psychotherapist for elective credit. Introduced with the expectation that a handful of participants might be interested, the PDE soon became one of the most highly rated and distinctive electives in the program and has drawn the participation of over 60% of each class in the decade since its inception. On the one hand, the popularity of the PDE appears to run counter to the stigma usually associated with seeing a psychotherapist and to the reported lack of interest MBA students have for people-focused courses (Rynes, Trank, Lawson, & Ilies, 2003) and "probing into the patterns that make up a life" (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2006: 419). By contrast, it echoes reports of students' appreciation for courses that offer opportunities for pause and reflection amidst the pace and pressure of their management studies and careers (Snook, 2007). MBA curricula and executive education portfolios in many business schools increasingly feature courses that endeavor to "open the minds and hearts of executives and stimulate reflection on their lives" (Mirvis, 2008: 174; see also George, 2011; Petriglieri, 2011). These courses respond to calls for management education to be more mindful of how it not only enriches managers' knowledge and ability, but also influences their identity (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010).

Our aim here is not to advocate for the PDE's unique approach, compare it to other approaches, or test its efficacy in achieving a set of pedagogical aims. We aim to develop theory, through a qualitative study, about the process through which courses of the kind mentioned above may enrich traditional curricula and contribute to students' development as leaders. As an exemplar of those popular yet vaguely mysterious management education offers that focus on "personal development" in the service of leaders' development, the PDE and MBA in which it is embedded provided a research setting well suited to investigate a question of theoretical and practical relevance: "How can a management education curriculum foster the transformational learning that enables ongoing leader development?"

Our findings suggest that this occurs through a process of *personalization*, by which students examine their experience and revisit their life stories as part and parcel of management learning. This process complements the acquisition of conceptual knowledge and analytic skills from traditional coursework, strengthens students' abilities in the domain of self-awareness and self management, and allows them to clarify, revise, and integrate their life narratives. In the program we studied, the process was ignited by students' encounters with a set of MBA features—its encapsulation, novelty, and intensity—that rendered the program a regressive domain, that is, a social context that provoked and amplified individuals' experience and enactment of habitual responses and personal sensitivities. While the roots of issues explored in the PDE reached beyond the MBA, these issues emerged, and were vividly experienced, in the context of the program's activities and relations. Two groups of MBA features—institutional and interpersonal—affected how students interpreted, dealt with, and learned from the stressful and puzzling experiences sparked by the regressive domain. Together, these features provided a holding environment

[1] In March 2011, visiting the Web pages where the top-10 programs in the *Financial Times'* (2011) Global MBA Ranking described their distinctive features, we found 7 programs using the language of "transformation," 2 mentions of "personal development," and 2 mentions of "life-changing" experiences. All took place in business schools whose mission statements, as noted by Snook (2007), focused on developing "leaders."

within the MBA, that is, a social context that reduced disturbing affect and facilitated sense making (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010; Winnicott, 1975). Institutional holding features framed students' problematic MBA experiences as learning opportunities. Interpersonal ones in general, and the PDE in particular, sustained students' engagement in a combination of self-clarification, emotional processing, and planning of behavioral experiments. This framing and work, in turn, fostered participants' reflective engagement in every aspect of the MBA. Reflective engagement, defined as the discipline to examine one's experiences, acknowledge and manage one's emotions, and attempt behavioral experiments in conditions of uncertainty and pressure, allowed students to deal more constructively with potentially regressive experiences and to cultivate personal abilities that sustain ongoing leader development.

Articulating how management education can build the foundations on which the development of leaders rests, our study contributes to understanding the personal aspect of leader development, which has been deemed essential in conceptual scholarship (Ibarra et al., 2010; Lord & Hall, 2005; Shamir & Eilam, 2005) but has received scant empirical attention. While more research in a variety of settings is undoubtedly needed to test and refine the model proposed here, our study suggests that curricula which foster the personalization of management learning may transform potentially regressive features common to many "boot-camp"-like management education programs into the source of, and ground for, personal learning and development. In doing so, we bridge the focus of this special issue of the *Academy of Management Learning & Education* with the broader debate on the values, purpose, and functions of management education (Bennis & O'toole, 2005; Ghoshal, 2005; Khurana, 2007; Mintzberg, 2004; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010; Pfeffer & Fong, 2002; Podolny, 2009).

LEARNING FOR LEADERSHIP: HOW AND WHERE?

There is broad agreement that learning from experiences of leading and following is the primary mechanism through which leaders develop (DeRue & Wellman, 2009; Kolb, 1984; McCall, 1998). Learning from experience is an active, personal, and social process. The ways we examine, the inferences we draw from, and the actions we take in response to experiences are influenced by "the images, assumptions, and stories that we carry in our minds of ourselves and others" (Raelin, 2007: 509). These, in turn, are rooted in and reinforced by the social systems—families, schools, organizations, and communities—in which we have been and are embedded (Reynolds & Vince, 2004). This underpins the suggestion that leader development must guide individuals in becoming conscious of and examining those inner images, assumptions, and stories—and in revising them when they are found to limit ongoing development (Dominick, Squires, & Cervone, 2010; Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007; Ligon & Hunter, 2010).

Capturing an emerging consensus, Hackman and Wageman (2007) argued that a key question in leadership studies is not "what should be taught in leadership courses, but *how can leaders be helped to learn*?" (46, italics in original). Viewed from this perspective, the function of leadership courses is to enable participants to make new meaning of, and draw more meaning from, their past and ongoing experiences to support and accelerate their development as leaders (Avolio & Hannah, 2008; Snook, 2007). Fulfilling this function entails developing individuals' self-awareness (Luthans & Avolio, 2003) and their ability to manage the ambiguity and anxiety attendant to leadership (Hackman & Wageman, 2007) and experiences that develop it (DeRue & Ashford, 2010b), so that they can examine, draw lessons from, and integrate those experiences into their life narratives (Bennis & Thomas, 2002; Shamir & Eilam, 2005).

Putting it in the language of educational scholars, courses that aim to develop leaders must be less concerned with informational learning, which focuses on "the acquisition of more skills and an increased fund of knowledge" (Portnow, Popp, Broderick, Drago-Severson, & Kegan, 1998: 22), and more with transformational learning, which involves reflection on one's life experiences, core beliefs, and ways of making sense of the world and oneself, thus affecting "a deep and pervasive shift in a [person's] perspective and understanding" (Portnow et al., 1998: 22). Whether management education can foster the transformational learning that supports and accelerates leaders' development, however, is a matter of scholarly debate.

Transformational learning involves engaging with and examining practice and experience as they occur (Raelin, 2007; Schön, 1983); consequently, critics have argued that transformation cannot take place within courses, such as full-time MBA programs, that remove participants for long periods from the organizations and communities in which the practice of leading and managing formally takes place (Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002). According to this view, such courses offer the worst of both worlds. They remove individuals from the

flow of "real" work experience—the raw material of meaningful learning—and immerse them in educational systems that privilege discipline-based, abstract knowledge while replicating the relentless pace, task focus, and reflective deprivation of work environments (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2006).

A different view focuses on the opportunities that such courses provide. Managers often attend business schools as a way to facilitate career transitions (Ibarra, 2003), and use them as "identity workspaces," that is, settings in which to question and shape their personal and professional identity (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010). During transitions between roles, individuals are more open to questioning their identity and career trajectory (Schein, 1990). In addition, entering a novel setting and community stimulates conscious sense making, which involves reflecting on and revisiting one's understanding of both the context and oneself (Louis, 1980). Being separated from our familiar environments and communities loosens up our sense making from the constraints they present; affords the opportunity to examine, from some distance, how past identifications have affected the images, assumptions, and stories that populate our inner world; and offers the possibility of experimenting with different ways of approaching and understanding others and ourselves (Ibarra, 2003, 2007). The question then becomes not whether, but *how* can a management education curriculum foster the transformational learning that enables ongoing leader development? This research question is our focus here. We are not concerned with assessing the prevalence of transformational learning in management education, testing the efficacy of one approach in fostering it, comparing different approaches, or proving causal links. We aim to develop theory that may inform scholarship and practice on this important question, through a qualitative study of participants' experiences within the Personal Development Elective and its MBA context.

METHODS

Research Context

The PDE takes place within an international 1-year MBA program that recruits a class of 90 students each year. With the exception of one or two national residents, students arrive from their home countries shortly before classes begin. The program places a heavy emphasis on work in small, diverse groups; participants are members of four such groups over the year. The first 6 months are dedicated to the required curriculum; the second half to a consulting project and recruitment activities; and elective courses (other than the PDE) occupy the last month. In the year of our study, the class average age was 31; average work experience was 7.5 years; over 85% of the students had prior management experience; and 20% were women. Forty-five nationalities were represented.

Alongside the traditional lecture- and case-based courses on the functional disciplines of business management, the MBA program featured a "Leadership Stream" that unfolded throughout the year. The design and pedagogy of this stream was conceptually grounded in a "clinical" approach, building on the assumption that both cognitive and emotional, conscious and unconscious, forces coalesce to shape human behavior and influence the exercise of leadership; hence, leadership development needs to provide a safe place in which the investigation and integration of such forces can occur (Kets de Vries, 2005a; Petriglieri & Wood, 2005). The Leadership Stream encompassed a required curriculum and two elective courses. The required curriculum included a series of classroom-based lectures and discussions of cases, readings, and self-assessment questionnaires; a weekend of experiential group activities facilitated by professional group consultants who later served as individual coaches for their group's members;[2] an autobiography that participants wrote before they arrived at the program and revised prior to the third coaching session; three reflective papers—on their first group's development, on their role in groups, and on the dynamics of their consulting projects; a feedback process where, by way of an anonymous on-line 180-degree platform, participants rated themselves and all other members of each group in which they worked. The two elective offerings were the "Personal Development Elective" and an "Introduction to Advanced Group Dynamics."

The Personal Development Elective began in the 2nd month of the program. The memo introducing the PDE to participants positioned it as a "tutorial in self-awareness" with a focus on personal growth. It explained that the PDE consisted of 20 hour-long individual sessions with a psychotherapist and provided an opportunity to explore issues of a private and personal nature. Upon completion of the 20 hours, participants received one elective credit.[3,4] Other than the communication of

[2] The three individual coaching sessions, attended by all participants, occurred at the end of the experiential weekend in the 1st month, 3 and 6 months into the program.

[3] The allocation of 20 hours resulted from a multiparty negotiation between faculty championing the course, the MBA and

completion to the administration, the PDE was completely confidential. Together with a short briefing from the Leadership Stream director and the memo description, students were given résumés of 20 therapists and were encouraged, if interested, to speak to two or three before choosing the one with whom they would like to work. In the year of our study, 77 out of 90 MBA participants took the PDE, rating its overall value 4.5 on a 5-point scale.

Unlike the psychological support and short-term psychotherapy offered by university clinics and counseling centers to students in distress, the PDE did not simply aim to deal with crises or to return individuals rapidly to their previous patterns of functioning. It focused on examining the experience and meaning of a student's life with an eye to his or her ongoing development. While it did pay attention to the influence of early development on students' functioning and aspirations, the PDE did not focus on damage and dysfunction in the way that psychotherapy is often described in articles distinguishing it from executive coaching (Coutu & Kauffman, 2009; Hart, Blattner, & Leipsic, 2001; Kets de Vries, 2005b). Rather, it rested on a prospective view of psychic life—that the psyche is not only bound in endless repetition of infantile experiences and identifications but also is pulling the individual toward the achievement of a fulfilled life and purposeful work.[5]

Our choice of research setting followed a theoretical logic (Miles & Huberman, 1994). First, the aim of the PDE was to foster personal development through assisted exploration of the inner world, personal history, aspirations, and behavior of management students. Second, the PDE was embedded in an MBA program's leadership curriculum whose explicit focus was enhancing students' capacity to exercise leadership effectively and responsibly. These elements, common to many management education offerings that aim to encourage and assist personal reflection in the service of leaders' development, made the PDE and its broader context, as experienced by the people involved in it, a setting well suited to inductively theorize how management education may foster the transformational learning that supports leaders' ongoing development.

Sample and Data Collection

The primary data for this study was drawn from a wider investigation of the development of individuals in an international MBA program and was collected through in-depth, semistructured interviews conducted by the third author with the MBA participants and by the first author with the psychotherapists. Research participants were recruited by way of an e-mail sent to all 90 prospective students in one MBA class. This invitation phrased the purpose of the study broadly as to "research both the personal and professional development process of individuals during their MBA year," stressed that participation was voluntary, and assured that interviews would be confidential and used solely for research purposes. All 55 participants who signaled their interest were included in the study. This sample is representative along the lines of age, work experience, nationality, and gender when compared to the demographics of the full cohort. Of the 55 students interviewed, 48 chose to take the PDE elective, and 43 completed it. Twenty PDE psychotherapists were invited to contribute to the research and four accepted.

Each student was interviewed three times: during the month prior to the start of the MBA (wave 1),

school deans, and the participating psychotherapists. The decision reflected pedagogical, psychological, and economic considerations. Twenty hours allowed students, if they so wished, to take advantage of one hourly session every fortnight. Twenty hours was also the minimum duration of a significant course of therapy according to a psychotherapy training institute of international repute based in the region. The PDE drew mostly on a pool of therapists in the late stages of training there. Within their advanced training, therapists received weekly supervision, which ensured the quality and professionalism of their work. Therapists were invited to a half-day discussion session on the MBA and Leadership Stream context. However, they received no briefing to focus their work in any particular area other than those they would contract with individuals who requested their services.

[4] Those who wanted to continue beyond the 20 hours could do so by contracting directly with their therapists.

[5] While sharing a developmental focus with executive coaching, the psychotherapy offered in the PDE differs in important ways. The scope of issues explored in psychotherapy tends to be broader, encompassing clients' early history and identifications and addressing issues affecting both their personal and professional lives. Executive coaching usually aims to address specific work issues and reducing discrepancies between clients' behavior and that required of specific or ideal roles. Even in longer engagements, coaches often do not have the time or remit to work on psychological issues that affect their clients' professional functioning. When they become aware of a conflict "between the need to do long-term development as opposed to quickly solving behavioural, performance, or organizational problems related directly to work," notes Kilburg (2004: 266) in a review of psychodynamic executive coaching, the long-term development is usually put aside. Finally, numerous authors have cautioned that unlike psychotherapists, executive coaches don't always have the requisite professional training and expertise to safely bring into focus clients' personal history and development and help them explore how these may affect—consciously and unconsciously—their perceptions, emotional life, and behavior (Berglas, 2002; Hart et al., 2001; Kilburg, 2004; Sherman & Freas, 2004; Wood & Petriglieri, 2005a).

at the midpoint of the program (wave 2)—when they were likely to have recently started the PDE—and in the final 2 weeks prior to graduation (wave 3)—when they had recently completed it. All interviews covered material of both a professional and personal nature and included questions about how participants felt in addition to what they thought about their experiences. The first interview took the form of a life history interview (Atkinson, 1998), supplemented with additional questions regarding the person's motivation for undertaking the MBA, expectations for the year and the post-MBA future. The second and third interviews included questions regarding students' experiences in the MBA, their personal and professional development, and various course elements, including the PDE. Specifically, we invited participants to elaborate on why and how they had decided to take the elective. We also asked how they would describe the process to an outsider and whether, to what extent, or how they had benefited from it. The second and third interviews became progressively more focused to capitalize on themes that emerged during our analysis (Spradley, 1979), and to follow up on specific points discussed in previous interviews. Interviews ranged from 40 to 90 minutes. All were tape-recorded with permission and professionally transcribed.[6]

Interviews with the four psychotherapists were conducted at the end of the program. These interviews focused on the reasons students initially consulted them, the themes that emerged during their work with PDE participants, the process of therapy, and their observations of the MBA environment. Although the therapists provided examples during interviews, they kept client identities confidential. On average, these interviews lasted 60 minutes. All were tape-recorded with permission and professionally transcribed. Sources of secondary data included documentation describing the MBA, the Leadership Stream, and the PDE. Interview transcripts generated over 1,500 pages of single-space text. We used ATLAS5, a qualitative data management software, to store and organize primary data, field notes, and secondary sources.

Data Analysis

The data analysis followed an iterative process in which we moved back and forth between our emerging thematic understanding of the data and existing literature (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Analysis was conducted in two phases. The first was repeated following each wave of data collection. The second took place once data collection was complete.

Phase 1

Each wave of data collection was followed by a phase of analysis during which the first and third authors jointly conducted line-by-line analysis of small batches of interview transcripts. The purpose of this in-depth phase of open coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) was to find and group related statements into first order codes and tentative categories of related codes. This process was highly iterative and involved many rounds of grouping and regrouping themes. For example, analyzing participants' accounts of the early months of the program, the metaphor of the MBA as a "pressure cooker" kept recurring in relation to "difficult experiences" with the "coursework," "small-group debates," and "informal interactions." While we used those as early codes, a closer look at these statements led to the emergence of the themes of "encapsulation," "novelty," and "intensity" of MBA activities and relations, and of "emotional distress" and "existential puzzlement" as participants' experiences. These themes later coalesced as the features and functions of the broader theoretical dimension, "regressive domain."

We typically agreed upon a preliminary coding scheme following detailed analysis of approximately 20 transcripts. We then used this scheme to systematically review all 55 transcripts and document the codes and categories represented in each. We regularly checked the coding scheme during this systematic review and made minor alterations based on variations found in the data. Throughout this phase, and also during phase 2, we employed techniques of "constant comparison" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) that enabled the identification of patterns within the data as well as variations among and between these patterns. We also read or returned to relevant literature. For example, as we coded participants' accounts of being more able both to "take more distance and reflect" and to "express their feelings" and "behave differently" in the MBA context, we revisited work on reflective practice (Schön, 1983) and psychological engagement (DeRue & Ashford, 2010b; Kahn, 1990; Noe, Tews, & McConnell Dachner, 2010), which helped us refine the construct of "reflective engagement." On completion of phase 1 for the final wave of data collection, we had three coded interview transcripts and a one contact form that summarized our analysis

[6] The recording equipment malfunctioned during 7 of the 165 interviews. For these interviews, data consists of the interviewer's detailed notes transcribed within 24 hours.

for each of the 55 research participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Phase 2

During the second phase, all three authors met to conduct axial coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) in which we consolidated categories into higher levels of abstraction and searched for relationships between and variations within categories. By comparing the data across the three rounds of interviews, we were able to assess how categories related to each other over time. For example, this phase involved refining the distinction between the functions of institutional and interpersonal holding features, and theorizing how they complemented each other in fostering reflective engagement. In this phase, we consolidated a set of themes and theoretical categories (see Table 1 for an outline of the coding scheme with illustrative quotes). The final stage of this phase involved various iterations of building and ratifying frameworks against the data to ensure accurate representation (Locke, 2001). Constructing a theoretical model of the personalization of management learning concluded the analytic process. In reporting our findings below, however, we outline the model first, to orient the reader through the detailed description that follows.

FINDINGS

Overview

We set out to investigate how management education may foster the transformational learning that supports leaders' ongoing development. On the basis of the qualitative analysis described above, we propose that this occurs through a process of *personalization* by which individuals examine their experiences and revisit their life stories as part and parcel of management learning. In this section, we outline a theoretical model, induced from our data, that endeavors to capture the features of management education programs that ignite and sustain the personalization of management learning, how the process unfolds, and what it develops.

The model begins with an often hinted at, but poorly articulated, characteristic of management education programs in general and MBAs in particular—that is, their function as regressive domains. We define a *regressive domain* as a social context that provokes and amplifies individuals' experience and enactment of habitual responses and personal sensitivities. Three features of the program we studied sustained its regressive function: the encapsulation, novelty, and intensity of MBA activities and relations. Encountering, being immersed in, and having to deal with the regressive domain provoked varying degrees of emotional distress and existential puzzlement among participants. The former encompassed performance and social anxieties. The latter encompassed focused questions about what caused specific behaviors, as well as open questions about direction and purpose.

The PDE was central among a set of MBA features that helped participants approach and investigate these stressful and puzzling experiences rather than brush them aside. Together, these features provided a *holding environment* within the program, defined as a social context that reduces disturbing affect and facilitates sense making (Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010). Seven features of the MBA program contributed to the provision of a holding environment within it. Four were institutional—its encapsulation and novelty (which contributed both to the regressive domain and holding environment); the leadership course content, activities, and assignments; and the reputation of the PDE. Three were interpersonal: participants' relationships with coaches, select individual classmates, and therapists.

Engaging with the holding environment affected how students made sense of, dealt with, and learned from the stressful and puzzling experiences ignited by the regressive domain. Institutional holding features affected how they made sense of learning and of problematic experiences within the MBA. These features broadened the meaning of management learning to involve introspection and experimentation alongside the acquisition of models and skills. They also changed the meaning of problematic experiences, framing them as valuable opportunities for personal learning rather than as challenges or distractions. Last, they legitimized psychotherapy as a means to take advantage of those learning opportunities. Interpersonal holding features sustained participants' examination and revision of the ways they interpreted, responded emotionally to, and acted upon, their experiences. The PDE was central among interpersonal features because of its continuity and position within the MBA—integrated yet not immersed in it. Within the PDE, participants engaged in a combination of self-clarification, emotional processing, and planning behavioral experiments that fostered reflective engagement in every aspect of the MBA program.

We define *reflective engagement* as the discipline to examine one's experiences, acknowledge

TABLE 1
Coding Scheme and Illustrative Data

Theoretical dimensions	Second-order categories	First-order themes	Exemplary quotations (selected examples)
Regressive domain	Regressive features	• Physical and social encapsulation • Novelty of activities and relations • Intensity of activities and relations	"[My classmates] need to be extremely involved in everyone's life. It is as if they have nothing else to do but talk about everyone else." "You have different people skills, different experiences, different backgrounds, different cultures. And you need to work around all that and come to consensus. It was very stressful."
	Regressive functions	• Experiences of emotional distress • Questions about causes of puzzling behaviors • Questions about purpose and direction of career and life	"January and February were the most difficult periods for me. Every day I woke up and I wanted to leave. I just wanted to go and tell no one. I had been through a lot of emotional issues at that point, not only because of the program but also family issues. All that added to making me a wreck basically." "I really had questions in my head. Why am I this way? I don't have a reason to be this way. Why do I sometime fall back into that behavior that I don't like? I have always been interested to explore that more."
Holding environment	Institutional holding features	• Protective nature of encapsulation and novelty • Leadership stream's content and activities • PDE reputation	"Given that we are in a big bubble, you have the right to do whatever you want. So basically you are quite secure here. You have the luxury and the time to . . . discover yourself." "We had the classes with [leadership professor] and they sparked my interest. I started to see things, just by discussing in class and then reflecting on what we discussed by myself. But I felt that if I had somebody who led me through this process, it would probably be more valuable in accelerating it, and that's why I decided to embark on [the PDE]."
	Institutional holding functions	• Learning involves introspection and experimentation • Stressful and puzzling experiences viewed as learning opportunities • Psychotherapy as means for leadership development	"The highlight for me is to be able to reflect back on my experience with these people and not feel any negative feelings—on the contrary, feeling happy that it went so wrong because I could learn so much." "[In the first group] it was kind of a painful experience because, you feel misunderstood and then try to understand why it doesn't work out, and why there are these conflicts, and this triggered quite a process of reflection."
	Interpersonal holding features	• Relationship with therapist • Relationship with coach • Relationship with select peers	"[My therapist] gave me an opportunity to express what I felt without being judged and without having to explain lots of details. She gave me also the tools to be able to counteract situations, because the first group was terrible. Now I can laugh about it, but it was very intense, very emotional, very negative. She gave me the tools to be able to go in and say okay, I am going to do it and I am going to do my best. Had I not had her it would have been much, much more difficult." "We had a coach for the group and he said I could gain from doing this. There were all these things in my behavior that I wanted to better understand from the beginning, like sometimes holding back and lacking energy. That was why I took the PDE."

(Continues)

and manage one's emotions, and attempt behavioral experiments in conditions of uncertainty and pressure. This discipline allowed students to deal more constructively with and learn from potentially regressive MBA experiences. Participants who were not involved in the PDE and broader holding environment appeared more likely to deal with the regressive domain by maintaining distance from its emotional intensity and pursuing academic and social activities. They engaged less in the personalization process, and their accounts of learning from the MBA focused primarily on the abstract knowledge and professional skills gained from traditional elements of the MBA curriculum.

TABLE 1
(Continued)

Theoretical dimensions	Second-order categories	First-order themes	Exemplary quotations (selected examples)
	Interpersonal holding functions	• Examining roots and unfolding of behavior • Assisting processing of emotions • Planning behavioral experiments	"I think it was useful to look at this conflict that I have in the study groups or in the class, to analyze each point, and to put it in a different perspective. [The PDE] helps me realize and understand much more what is happening with specific issues that are annoying me, why they annoy me, and how to really work with that." "[My therapist] is getting me to realize my effect on others, and I am trying to work on that. This is actually what she does. I would have thought I would have broken down and cried or yelled at my teammates by now, or had a bigger fit, but I think part of why I haven't is because I have had [the PDE] fairly regularly, almost on a weekly basis, where I am processing what is going on and having an outlet."
Reflective engagement	Reflective engagement	• Examining experience as it occurs in MBA context • Acknowledging and managing emotions • Attempting behavioral experiments	"If I go back through my leadership papers, the one I wrote about the first group was like, 'Oh this guy is an arsehole and I hate him, he is causing all the problems in the group,' and now it has evolved to 'Ok, why am I reacting like this? What's really happening? Why is he behaving like this?' " "I found out that in groups I avoid issues, or cover up certain issues, so as to avoid conflict. Now I've become better at not pushing things under the table, letting things be, not confronting them myself probably, but at least I let other people explore their own conflicts instead of trying to sort it out for them."
Developmental outcomes	Self-awareness	• Understanding influence of past history on present experiences • Understanding effect of own behavior on others • Viewing self as a whole	"I feel more matured. I feel definitely more humble. But also older in kind of where I am with my life in general, you know I am recognizing that I am moving to the next stage. I am starting to think about family and kids and what's really important to me and I am giving myself time to say "okay, so what why am I doing this, and why is this important." So with that perspective I think it's more wise in some ways because before I was just doing." "[My work in the PDE] goes beyond the processing of the education experience, but really [brings together] being married to [X] and my relationship with my family, the drivers of my decisions, and more."
	Self-management	• Expressing self more openly • Holding back quick reactions	"I opened myself. I let people reach me some way. So I think I am not afraid of letting it happen anymore. I showed people my secret garden. That was very important, and very painful work." "Reflecting on my own, speaking with the analyst and trying to open up helped me understand what reactions I can have in certain conditions. Sometimes I get triggered into those behaviors, but the fact that I spoke them out, I know what can happen and how I can be perceived, helps me to stop the process."
	Life narrative revisiting	• Feeling freed up from previous life patterns • Feeling distinct parts of self more integrated	"I had my script and I am trying to build a new story. In those terms I exceeded the expectations of coming here. I came with a fear of having a breakthrough, but I am totally on the other side." "It has been very helpful just to learn to respect all parts of me. I am just more in tune with myself and hopefully I'll be able to carry that forward."

Participants who did engage in the personalization process, by contrast, reported an additional, more personal, layer of learning that encompassed three categories of outcomes. The first, self-awareness, included understanding the influence of past history on present experiences, being attentive to emotional and behavioral dynamics in social contexts, and seeing the self as a broader whole. The

second, self-management, included expressing oneself more openly or, conversely, holding back one's impulsive reactions. The third included experiences of liberation and integration related to revisiting their life narratives.

Two boundary conditions should be noted at this point. This study did not aim to confirm or refute extant scholarship arguing that self-awareness, self-management, and the ability to process and integrate life experiences into an overarching narrative are foundational for the ongoing development of leaders. It does, however, theorize how these abilities may be fostered within management education through the personalization of management learning. As with all theoretical models developed inductively, future research is needed to test the model's validity. Similarly, this study does not advocate for, or test the efficacy of, the use of psychotherapy within management curricula. As mentioned earlier, the PDE and its MBA context were a research setting well suited to explore how management education may foster transformational learning that supports leaders' development. Other pedagogical approaches that assist ongoing personal exploration and experimentation in the context of potentially regressive settings are likely to foster the personalization of management learning. Although we speculate about what the key elements of such approaches may be in the discussion, comparing different approaches is beyond our scope here. Our study puts forward a model of the personalization process through which these approaches may foster leaders' development. Below we describe each element of this process, weaving the voices of study participants into our analytic narrative.

The Regressive Domain: Features and Functions

It is not unusual to hear that students in management education programs, individually and collectively, sometimes behave "like kids actually." Our study participants experienced the MBA as a regressive domain, defined as a social context that provokes and amplifies individuals' experience and enactment of habitual responses and personal sensitivities. These experiences and enactments occurred on the stage provided by daily MBA activities and relations. As one participant put it, he soon realized that he had "the same problem with my family, with my friends, and with my colleagues in the group." Three features of the MBA we studied, common to many such programs, contributed to its function as a regressive domain: the encapsulation, novelty, and intensity of MBA activities and relations.

Encapsulation

The physical and social encapsulation of the MBA community was extreme, and the MBA was often referred to as "a big bubble." Most students knew no one in the area outside of school, and in their little free time, they socialized with each other. Many actively distanced themselves from groups back home to take a break, gain a fresh perspective, and develop new relationships. Having divested former work roles and responsibilities and parted with familiar communities, participants faced the challenges to decipher, operate in, and negotiate relationships within the MBA context with little external help. "You have nothing but yourself here," remarked one student, noticing how exposed he felt in comparison with his old workplace, where he could hide his "weaknesses." "In the office," noted another, "we are forced to behave ourselves and show ourselves nicely, otherwise people may think you are not credible. But here, because we have no title and we are friends and not colleagues, we can show ourselves more straightforwardly." Because of the encapsulation, separating one's "personal" from one's "professional" life and social circles was hardly possible. Classmates were colleagues, social acquaintances, friends, foes, and, occasionally, romantic partners.

Novelty

MBA activities and relations were by and large novel. Although all participants had been in educational institutions in the past, they had spent years prior to the MBA mostly in corporate settings—doing work altogether different from studying, debating case studies with classmates from all over the world, and working on projects and assignments in diverse groups with a flat formal authority structure, on the composition of which they had no control. One participant, who had managed a large department in a health care organization for 5 years before the MBA, recalled thinking, "My God, do we really have to have seven people all agree on this? I'd like to just work on it on my own and make all the decisions." Except for brief encounters and on-line interactions, participants were strangers to each other when they arrived, and the MBA community was more diverse than any educational or professional community most of them had been members of before. Despite having managed teams with members in multiple continents, one student noted that "the class is very diverse in terms of culture, beliefs,

values and religion, and has exposed me to differences that I didn't have much exposure to before."

Intensity

The program's reputation as being extremely intense was mirrored in participants' reports about the toll taken by MBA activities and relations. Participants often stayed in school past midnight. One deadline or other always loomed, and 80-hour working weeks were the norm. As a result, many students felt they were "never on top of things." The discussion-based pedagogy of most classes, the structure and diversity of the groups, and the weight class participation and group projects had on grades meant that participants were constantly involved in heated debates with each other. Other than the few hours they slept, they were seldom alone. The only respite from work was offered by parties that contributed to the regressive intensity. "It was like being in high school," recalled one participant. "Who are your friends? Are you getting invited to this and that? It was surprisingly uncomfortable at times." One last factor contributing to the intensity was the large investment, financial and personal, that participants had made to attend the MBA and the feeling that one needed to "really maximize each second."

The encapsulation, novelty, and intensity were captured by the image of the MBA as a "pressure cooker" used by several of our study participants. Cast in a novel context, stripped of the possibilities to take a break or separate personal and professional circles, and pressured by the program intensity, people's most ingrained personal habits and sensitivities came to the surface. In the words of one participant, "the pressure cooker environment, particularly in the first 6 months, just magnifies everybody's behavior to an extreme degree, and then it becomes much easier to see than if you are in a relaxed environment and people are able to suppress some of it." The daily encounters with the regressive features of the MBA, and the conscious and amplified experience of their habits and sensitivities, generated varying degrees of emotional distress and existential puzzlement among participants.

Emotional Distress

All participants reported being "stirred up," or "struggling" emotionally in the first months of the program. The feelings of distress ranged from mild expressions of concerns, such as, "I never expected that my security would be so challenged. I felt nervous for ridiculous things," to strong feelings of discomfort, such as, "I needed help, because I was getting too stressed." For some, the distress was related to performance anxieties raised by the MBA coursework and the high standards of professors and classmates. Commenting on the workload, one participant recalled imagining "someone sitting in a control room turning up the stress dial. We were really pushed." The most common cause of reported distress in the first half of the program, however, was difficulties in relationships. "The first group was painful" was a common remark in our sample. Later on, concerns about the groups subsided and the "job search mass hysteria" took center stage.

Existential Puzzlement

Even for those who had not entered the MBA wrestling with specific dilemmas, the program stirred up questions about who they were and what they wanted. Some questions concerned specific aspects of one's behavior that were hard to understand—habits and sensitivities that kept affecting personal and professional relations. "I feel like a Latin guy in a European suit," reflected one student. "I don't know where it comes from. Sometimes I want to approach people, to speak to them, but I have all these things that hold me back." Other questions concerned broader issues of purpose and direction. "I came here and everything impacted me in the same moment," recalled another student participant. "You are in a new environment, you are under a lot of pressure, you are alone, and you don't know what to do with your life—with the life that you left and the life that is coming after. So you have a lot of questions going all the time." Often the questions were accompanied by a vague feeling of restlessness, that one student described as "a personal feeling that doesn't allow me to rest, doesn't allow me to sleep." As one therapist put it, "Every student I have worked with, every one, I felt, had a strong desire to talk about a real, I won't say problem, but it was something that they needed to tell someone about. It was very much a psychological problem, not so much about career, it went much deeper."

The Holding Environment: Features and Functions

The Personal Development Elective was central among a number of MBA features that affected how participants understood, dealt with, and learned from, the feelings and questions sparked by the regressive domain. The combination of these features—which we grouped into institu-

tional and relational ones—provided a holding environment within the MBA.

Institutional Holding Features

Encapsulation and novelty contributed both to the regressive domain and to the holding environment within the MBA. Because of them, the MBA community developed its own culture, distinct from—and often in opposition to—those of students' everyday worlds. It was a culture where self-examination was the norm, and there was no stigma attached to seeing a psychotherapist. One student characterized the difference as follows: "In the work environment things stay superficial, while we go a lot deeper here." Another observed: "You have an opportunity here, you are in a safe environment, everybody's doing [therapy]. So you don't feel an outsider if you do it. It feels safe to say, 'I'm seeing my shrink tomorrow'—which is something I would have difficulty saying in public back home."

The meaning and value of self-examination and psychotherapy within the MBA culture was shaped significantly by the Leadership Stream. With its focus on investigating the covert and unconscious aspects of human behavior, the stream lent an importance to introspection for leaders' development and legitimized psychotherapy as a means to pursue both. As one student put it, "For the first 3 months we had the leadership course, the group dynamics, and all of a sudden it gave me this idea of going to a psychoanalyst. I've never thought of doing that before, I mean, I'm not nuts." The PDE's reputation with alumni and the press reinforced the narrative linking introspection and psychotherapy with leaders' development. Commenting on why he had opted to take the PDE, a student recalled that "when the *Wall Street Journal* said you had your own shrink, I thought that's for me, it's good to reflect."

These institutional holding features broadened the meaning ascribed to learning to include introspection and experimentation alongside the acquisition of business concepts and skills. As one student put it, "Before I came to [MBA program], I pictured myself studying a lot and finding a job. I never imagined thinking about myself, having a moment in my life to get away from everything and really focus on who I am, what I want." The meaning of difficult experiences shifted from being disturbances to being learning opportunities of a unique kind. This shift, in turn, normalized the disturbing affect and gave it potential value, as reflected in the following therapist's view.

> The mental and physical stress starts wearing [participants] down during the year. Their defenses really do start breaking down, and they either overreact or their reactions and conversations become very unguarded. You see fits of anger breaking out, you see petty jealousies emerging. So many interesting things start appearing during the course of the year, and that's the real material to work with. From that often there are very significant breakthroughs that can be and have been achieved.

Interpersonal Holding Features

The coaching sessions early in the year, close relationships students developed with select individual classmates, and the PDE, were features that sustained participants' examination of their MBA experiences. The PDE was central among interpersonal holding features because it was more frequent and ongoing than coaching, and because it was removed from, and yet close to, the MBA experience—integrated but not assimilated to the rest of the program. As one participant put it, "The study group situations, the program, all the interactions—they make you think. Talking with an external person is difficult because they are not part of the program. The people in your group are part of the problem, so it's difficult to share with them. The PDE was good because it gave me a more external point of view." Within it, students worked on a range of personal concerns (outlined in Exhibit 1), and their manifestations within the MBA context. This work encompassed three mutually reinforcing processes: self-clarification, emotional processing, and planning behavioral experiments.

Self-clarification involved identifying and examining the patterns of cognition, emotion and behavior underlying puzzling experiences, and linking them with one's history and identity. This resulted in a clearer understanding of the roots, triggers, and consequences of those experiences. "There was a role I found myself in," explained one participant, "which related a bit to my being a younger brother . . . That was a point we discussed, and it has been useful because [the therapist] helps me understand. If you know your, let's call them complexes, or scripts, or whatever is inside of you, as soon as you know them better, it's easier to manage them."

Emotional processing involved expressing, examining, and managing the emotions ignited by MBA experiences. This diffused the disturbing affect and fed into the self-clarification work. As one student put it, the PDE had "unloaded a lot of

EXHIBIT 1
What Did the MBAs Bring to Therapy?

The concerns most commonly expressed and explored within the PDE can be grouped into four broad categories: trauma, insecurity about self-worth, personal relationships, and future direction and meaning.

Trauma. Some students' development had been heavily influenced by trauma in their past. Sometimes the trauma derived from war, accident, or natural catastrophe, as the following student recounted, "Three months before I was born, war broke out in [my home country]. After the war most of my family had to go to prison, to some kind of jungle camps. My father had to go for 3 years. After that he and my brother took a boat and left the country overnight. I was 4 years old. Luckily, my father and my brother made it to [Europe]. After more than 2 years, they managed to bring my mother and my two sisters and myself." For other students, the trauma derived from a sense of absence, loss, or betrayal within the family. Rather than an acute trauma related to any specific event, some students were affected by subtler deprivations or stifling demands, resulting from being deprived of freedom or carefree time as children, or being forced to study a musical instrument against one's will, or being forced to compete relentlessly in school to win their parent's admiration and love.

Insecurity about self-worth. Many students' sense of self-worth was highly, if not excessively, dependent on external approval. As a result, they struggled to uphold a shaky self-image to stave off feelings of insecurity. Every endeavor became a test, and proving oneself started anew every day. As one of the therapists put it, "I am astounded [by] how achievement means everything to them. One of the things that always seems to come up is, "Who are you without this tangible achievement? Why do you define yourself through what you do? Who are you underneath that? What if you just did nothing, who would you be?" To me that's an important question, and it is often the essential sign of development when they start perceiving that they are more than what they achieve." Given the novelty and intensity of the MBA, insecurity in the face of relentless pressure to perform is a natural reaction. However, for many of these students, being good wasn't good enough; they felt they should be perfect. Behind their glittering "high flyer" persona lingered a fear of being "imposters," who did not deserve their reputation and success (Kets de Vries, 2005c). A consequence of this fear was ambivalence about intimate friendships, and a preference for "pleasant" acquaintances instead. Despite a broad social circle, our data echo Dubouloy's (2004) finding of the MBAs' persistent loneliness. "I have moved around so much," noted one student. "You don't really become close to people, because they'll leave, because you know the expat life, so you tend to not open up a lot and you stay a little bit closed, protecting yourself a little bit."

Issues surrounding personal relationships were another major thread in the tapestry of MBAs' personal work—failed relationships in the past; lack of relationships in the present; discomfort within marriages; instability of immediate partnerships; and the intensity of current interactions with colleagues.

EXHIBIT 1
(Continued)

Some students were keen to explore, within the PDE, the influence of significant past relationships on their life; others focused on their present ones—both within and outside the class. One student discussed this focus as follows: "I used to be jealous and I still am, but it used to be more debilitating. I thought we were being open, but I was unconsciously controlling, making [my girlfriend] feel as if she had to report back to me if she was going out with a guy friend and things like that. And she was like, I am okay with it. But then as [my therapist and I] discussed, maybe she is okay with it, but after a while it can feel very suffocating. So she might be okay now, but 5 years down the road it might be different."

Future direction and meaning. During the course of the MBA, it was common for students to pause and inquire about the meaning of what they were presently doing as well as about the wisdom of their desires for the future. Sometimes they even inquired about the meaning of their whole life. This questioning often began with mild feelings of unease, a sense that something was missing, or even of boredom. In time, the questions emerged more fully and provided an opening for exploration of their life trajectory and important existential issues. "I thought it was a good opportunity," said one participant about the PDE, "because a lot of things were probably going to come up. I was looking for direction, and I wanted to take some time to think about what I was going to do. So it was a good opportunity to meet my curiosity of what this kind of thing is about in general and also to try to redirect any thoughts I could have within the program."

anxiety and negativity that I was carrying around, which enabled me to lighten up and interact with people much better. It has been a whole domino set of consequences. I am not a perfect human being but I am certainly much more comfortable in myself about why I feel the way I feel, and how to understand why I behave in some way."

Planning Behavioral Experiments. The insights and equanimity gained through self-clarification and emotional processing, in turn, led students to plan how to behave differently. Discussing how examining his frustrated silence in group debates had led him to taking a more active role, one student noted that "the reason I stayed on the periphery of groups was that I was afraid of what could happen if I got involved and they didn't like it, or to be seen as stupid or arrogant. Working in the PDE I realized it didn't make sense. I wasn't experimenting at all."

Reflective Engagement

The holding environment helped participants to make new meaning of difficult MBA experiences,

thanks to institutional features that framed them as learning opportunities, and to draw more meaning from them, thanks to interpersonal features that sustained their interpretation and management. In doing so, it fostered students' reflective engagement in all aspects of the MBA. We define *reflective engagement* as the discipline to examine one's experience, acknowledge and manage one's emotions, and attempt behavioral experiments in conditions of uncertainty and pressure. This discipline helped students deal more constructively with potentially regressive MBA features.

First, reflective engagement entailed taking enough distance from the regressive intensity of the MBA to be able to examine the meaning of one's experiences as they occurred and focus on the questions one intended to pursue. As a student put it,

> When you start here, you realize a lot of things, and you have a lot of questions in your head, but you don't really have the time to answer or think about them. The PDE has given me the time to reflect on myself, on what's going on in my head, on what's going on in my heart, on what's going on in my life. It is also making me pay attention during the everyday activity, to what I am thinking. If I wouldn't have the PDE, I wouldn't have to stop and think about me, I would do something else, study more, whatever, but not really stop and be aware of what's happening.

Second, reflective engagement entailed acknowledging and managing the emotional undercurrents of potentially regressive experiences. "I was sitting in my group last week," recalled another participant discussing how he felt more equipped to examine, rather than react to, difficult emotional experiences, "and all of a sudden I realized that I was totally being excluded from the group. Probably for some good reasons, as I am very different from that particular group of people. It was just incredible to sit there and see that happening. I felt really bad about it, I felt like there was something wrong with me, and I could think about how did I get into this position, why did this happen, how did this happen. That is the type of thing that I have not done before in a group situation." Reflecting on the emotions he experienced during recruitment season, another participant noted: "It was important for me to have lots of offers, honestly speaking, to get that kind of recognition—maybe it is not so nice to say—assuring me that I can be better than others. I became aware that I look for that, which was not clear to me before, and it kind of released me—it's a burden off my shoulders."

Third, reflective engagement entailed resisting the pull of familiar roles and habitual patterns of behavior, and experimenting with a broader behavioral repertoire. Reflecting on how his role in groups had changed over the year, one participant gave the following example:

> There was an instance this morning where we had a meeting at 8 and one guy turned up at 9.30. He called ahead, and I said, 'be there at 9.' So when he arrived I said, 'look I want to talk about this, this is really pissing me off.' I wouldn't have done that six months ago. I would have been pissed off then gone home and told my wife about it. I am much more likely to say "actually, this really bothers me," as a result of that.

Rather than becoming less inhibited, someone else's experiments had taken the opposite trajectory: "I used to get frustrated, I would interrupt the group and say, 'this is going nowhere, just pick something and do it.' I have learned to handle my own behavior. I had a tendency to drag everyone along, and I learned that getting everyone to agree on what we are doing at the start is pretty useful rather than charging ahead."

The long duration of both the PDE and the MBA, and the recurrence of many potentially regressive experiences made it possible to exercise and consolidate reflective engagement over the year. Many students spoke of how their experience and learning in the MBA were inextricably linked with their work in the PDE, and vice versa. MBA experiences provided rich data for personal exploration in the PDE. This, in turn, allowed them to engage differently with the MBA. Several claimed that without the support of the PDE they would not have had the discipline to "stop and think" about important questions, that they would have been caught in relentless activity or overwhelmed by stress, that they would "have never really learned."

Some evidence supporting these statements emerged from analyzing how participants who had not taken or had engaged little with the PDE dealt with the experiences that ignited the personalization of management learning for the majority of our sample. While their accounts of the MBA's regressive features were similar to those of participants engaged in the work described above, they managed the regressive features differently. They made sense of the distress the MBA ignited and the reflective efforts it sparked among many of their classmates, as tests or distractions for which they

had little time. One of these participants noted, "It took me a few weeks, but then I realized the game was to beat us up. It's like the army deals with building leaders. This place does it with stress and sleep deprivation. It was like, oh my God, is this ever going to end? It was disorienting, until I realized it was a game and said 'well, how hard can you push us?' " Another remarked, "most people here seem to be searching for something, I don't know what they are going to do with their lives." In short, rather than examining puzzling experiences and approaching emotional distress to process them, they located the source of distress and uncertainty in "the system," and focused on pursuing grades, job offers, and social activities.

In addition, upon leaving the MBA these students described their learning differently than those who engaged in the personalization process illustrated above. Their accounts focused primarily on the abstract knowledge and analytic skills acquired through the traditional elements of the MBA curriculum. "Most importantly," said one participant reflecting on what he had learned, "I have gained a big toolbox to see and analyze problems or situations differently, and to understand when X works better than Y." Participants who engaged in the personalization process reported an additional, more personal layer of learning that was complementary, not alternative, to the learning drawn from the traditional curriculum—hence these students' claims that they had learned "more" and gone "deeper" than they expected in an MBA.[7] As one put it, "there's been learning on the outside and learning on the inside."

Developmental Outcomes

Three broad categories of developmental outcomes resulted from the personalization of management learning—self-awareness, self-management, and revisiting of life narratives.

Self-Awareness

Most students used the language of "self-awareness" to describe what they gained from the PDE. When they mentioned it in interviews, we followed up to obtain a clearer understanding of what "self-awareness" meant to them. What they described was one, or a combination, of three features.

The first was a clearer understanding of the influence of past history on current values, inclinations, and patterns of behavior. For example, one participant realized, "I have always been this loner, I am very social but I am a loner. It comes from a very early age, maybe the first three years of my development. Because my eldest sibling was hyperactive, and the middle one was needier, I was sort of always on my own, and I ended up being this independent loner. [My therapist and I] were able to explore all the way back to that period and identified that as my default position. It is something I ended up being, but is it where I really want to be?"

The second feature was the ability to focus on, and the interest in, making sense of one's own and others' emotional and behavioral patterns in social contexts. At one level, this involved holding a view of the likely effect of one's behavior on others. One student, for example, remarked, "I'm more aware. I'm very controlling, and if I do something very controlling when I work with other people, I immediately recognize it, and I do something else to sort of counterbalance." At another level, this meaning of self-awareness encompassed a dynamic capacity described by one participant as being "more sensitive to observing what's going on around me in a group, inside me, to use more of my emotions as a sort of indicator of what's going on in a group, and to maybe also express those emotions more to relate with people."

The third feature involved developing a view of the self as a whole, accounting for the reciprocal influence of professional and personal aspects of one's life. As one participant put it, "I had a very siloed life. Personal life, school life, career life, this life, that life, and I think it is important to step back and look at yourself in the absence of all of those things and really understand who you are. It kind of helps you be that person in each of those different lives, so to speak." Common to all three meanings of self-awareness is the process of linking—past and present, emotion and cognition, self and others, personal and professional. Each denotes a process of active sense making that is separate from, but enables, personal change or action.

Self-Management

Self-management was the second broad category of ascribed outcomes that emerged from the data. It involved the perception of being more equipped

[7] The few exceptions consisted of those individuals who had reported, at the outset, that the personal development focus was the main reason for choosing this particular MBA. These were likely to describe the conceptual learning as far less meaningful, relevant, and important than the personal insights and abilities they had developed during the year. "If I knew this level of self-reflection would be achieved studying veterinary," said one participant, "I would have come anyway because the content of the courses was not as important as the process that went throughout and that made me reflect."

to manage one's thoughts, feelings, and behavior. This was reflected in accounts of being able to do "more of" or "less of" something, which we labeled "self-expression" and "self-restraint," respectively.

The former refers to occasions in which individuals were able to express, in words or actions, something that they would have previously felt inhibited about expressing—usually because of personal insecurities or uncertainty about others' impressions and reactions. There were numerous accounts of individuals reporting that they had "found their voice" and felt more comfortable and able to express their honest view in public, even when it was not aligned with a majority opinion. Comparing her behavior at the beginning and later in the program, one student remarked, "I was much more worried about what the group was thinking about me, or if I was doing the right thing. Then I realized that the right thing changes with perception. So I am much more me centered now in terms of positions. If I believe something, or I don't agree, or I think that this is the right way to go, I am sticking to my point."

The latter aspect of self-management, "self-restraint," refers to an individual's ability to refrain from expressing immediate reactions that they would have previously been unable to control or understand. This, in turn, made them feel more receptive and able to communicate effectively. As one student said, it did not mean "shutting up" but involved being able to ponder one's way of expression and its potential consequences before acting. "I'm less explosive," he noted, "I was more explosive with people, I didn't listen to others, or I didn't listen in the same way that I listen now, in a more open way and more reflective way. My girlfriend said that I am more relaxed when something is not going as I am expecting. Of course, I complain, but I am not reacting in as aggressive or explosive a way as I did before."

Revisiting of Life Narratives

Several research participants reported subjective experiences of "liberation" and "integration," related to a loosening up or a grounding understanding of their life narratives. Experiences of liberation encompassed feeling released from the burden of a troubling history or a limiting view of the self, having more flexibility in imagining one's future, and feeling able to escape the grip of disturbing reactions and self-defeating behavioral patterns. One student described this shift as follows: "When I came, I saw that there were some problems in my personal life, and the way I was affected by these events was actually significant. The [PDE] sessions changed the way I look at the events that happened, and this impacted the way I see the situation that I am in now. I felt a lot of anger initially, and now it's more acceptance."

Experiences of integration encompassed feeling grounded in an understanding of one's life unfolding coherently across various settings. The learning fostered by the personalization process helped to integrate past, present, and future; cognitive and emotional; personal and professional aspects of the individual's life. "I had never questioned that much the impact of my family background on my reactions and my decisions," explained one student, "or even on the way I am thinking of my career development right now. There are too many things going on, my wife is pregnant, I am getting this MBA, and at the same time I need to make the right money and I want to be happy and do something I love. How do you put those things together? These sessions help me to try and find out which are the things you should look at when making those decisions."

DISCUSSION

Our study extends a burgeoning stream of academic work that affords the individual's inner world and life story a central place in the development of managers (Kaiser & Kaplan, 2006; Lyons, 2002; Torbert & Fisher, 1992), and leaders (Day, 2001; Mumford & Manley, 2003; Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Scholars have argued that developing leaders entails deeper personal work alongside the acquisition of knowledge, skills, and abilities (Lord & Hall, 2005; Mumford & Manley, 2003), and yet the link between personal development and leadership effectiveness remains "underexploited in both the theory and practice of leader development" (Ibarra et al., 2010: 668). If exercising leadership authentically requires that leaders make their "values and conviction highly personal through their lived experiences, experienced emotions, and an active process of reflection on these experiences and emotions" (Shamir & Eilam, 2005: 397), our work here provides a rich account of that process in action and builds theory on how management education can sustain this fundamental aspect of leader development.

There is little debate among leadership scholars about the importance of intrapersonal abilities for the ongoing development of leaders (Day & Harrison, 2007; DeRue & Ashford, 2010b; Dominick et al., 2010; Hogan & Warrenfeltz, 2003). Empirical work in this area shows that individuals who continue being reflective in conditions of ambiguity and high emotion and who can manage their thoughts, feel-

ings, and behavior—with the help of others—are able to access more developmental assignments at work (Dragoni, Tesluk, Russell, & Oh, 2009) and to learn more from challenging leadership development opportunities (DeRue & Wellman, 2009). Hackman and Wageman (2007) suggest that leading well requires the emotional maturity to approach, and even sometimes provoke, anxiety-arousing situations to learn from them. Developing such maturity, they argue, involves "working on real problems in safe environments with the explicit support of others" (47). Our study reveals the process through which the explicit support of a set of holding features can help students work with, and learn from, the real problems and anxiety-provoking situations encountered in educational settings.

Even advocates of leader development through work experiences note that in action-learning projects, especially those that are demanding and visible, individuals often become overwhelmed by the focus on accomplishing the task, and learning takes a back seat (McCall, 2010). Therefore, Day (2010) recommended that the notion of "deliberate practice"—that is, practice separate from work experience—be given more attention in leadership development. Starkey and Tempest (2009) argued that hosting such "rehearsals" should be a primary function of management education. We posit that the personalization of management learning provides opportunities for deliberate practice or rehearsal, not only of behavioral routines or analytic skills, but of reflective engagement in demanding conditions. Our study participants' voices echo scholarship on learner engagement, which suggests that the more individuals engage personally with learning interventions, the more they will benefit from those interventions (Noe et al., 2010).

The conceptualization of personalization of management learning put forward here complements existing work on the value of its contextualization. The latter provides the rationale for action-learning approaches and part-time, project-based, and modular management development courses (Gosling & Mintzberg, 2006; Mintzberg & Gosling, 2002). We argue that the former provides the rationale for intense and encapsulating forms of management education. Seen from this perspective, the very features of management education programs that have been lamented as not being conducive to reflection—intensity, novelty, and encapsulation—provide a unique setting in which to undertake personal examination and development. Our study suggests that curricula supporting students in the process of making sense of, and dealing with, potentially regressive experiences help them to cultivate personal abilities that sustain and accelerate leader development. In other words, we posit that the personalization of management learning provides the link between management education and leader development.

A practical implication of our study and arguments is that attempts to design management education programs that do away with regressive features, if ever possible, may also limit their ability to foster the personalization process. A more pragmatic, and perhaps fruitful, approach to help leaders build foundations for their ongoing development may be to design curricula that balance regressive and holding features. Our study showed how an offering like the PDE, and its institutional infrastructure, can enhance the reflective component of management education programs, such as MBAs, where it is often lacking. The process we have described may shed light on how participants develop in leadership courses based on a "clinical" approach (Kets de Vries & Korotov, 2007; Petriglieri, 2011; Wood & Petriglieri, 2005b), complementing scholarship on courses based on self-assessment and 360-feedback instruments, coaching, project work, and action plans (e.g., Boyatzis et al., 2002; Hoover et al., 2010). The personalization of management learning can surely be fostered by a variety of pedagogical approaches. Our findings, however, suggest that fostering it is not simply a matter of adding a reflective course to already packed curricula. It entails designing curricula where institutional and interpersonal holding elements give meaning and positive value to regressive experiences, frame those experiences as learning opportunities, and support students' reflective engagement with them.

A vital characteristic of such curricula is educators who sustain a mainstream institutional discourse that broadens the meaning of learning beyond the acquisition of knowledge and skills, acknowledging regressive experiences as both part and parcel of attending a management program and as valuable learning opportunities. Program brochures, alumni testimonials, course syllabi, and deans' opening speeches all have a place in a holding institutional tapestry. Coursework that highlights the importance of examining how life stories affect—and are affected by—the way leaders interpret and act in the world is another important thread in that tapestry. Case studies can be fruitfully used for this purpose, by steering the discussion toward the meaning making that underpins leaders' decisions and actions. Conceptual learning about this topic can then be complemented by reflective writing assignments about

students' life stories and their effect on their way of being in the world of work—and in the program. Normalizing and legitimizing the exploration of stressful and puzzling experiences that students might otherwise be reluctant to acknowledge and discuss, or might even pathologize, is a key step in fostering the personalization of their learning. One way to gently do so is to bring those experiences into the least personal of educational settings—the classroom—for example by incorporating in the leadership coursework a case discussion of a student's personal journey through an MBA (e.g., Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2007). This also can be complemented by reflective assignments about students' questions and salient experiences in the program as compared to other settings.

Sustaining students' examination of their experiences in various groups; helping them give, ask for, and interpret feedback; and supporting experiments within those groups are probably centerpieces of such curricula. These processes can be kick-started by experiential group workshops and can be enhanced by reflective writing assignments about the development of students' groups and their roles in them. However, our study suggests that supporting students' reflective engagement beyond those workshops where reflection is the task, and into everyday program activities, is the function of interpersonal holding features. To what extent this function can be served by structured peer coaching (Parker, Hall, & Kram, 2008) to what extent it requires professionals, and what training and skills best suits those professionals are fruitful avenues for future research.

Limitations and Future Research

There are clearly limitations to our study. Because we developed our theory from a single research site, our findings may be viewed as idiosyncratic artifacts of that particular setting. Although our findings may not be generalizable in any strict sense, numerous characteristics of our study setting and the regressive features described are common to many MBA and other general management curricula. We hope future quantitative studies will test the validity of the model proposed here and establish causal links among its constructs. Future research may also examine a number of open questions. How is the personalization process affected by program duration, location, or status? Is there an optimal balance between regressive and holding features? Do different combinations of the two affect the proportion of students who engage in the process? Do programs with solid institutional holding features, but few structured interpersonal ones—such as ones where there is talk of self-awareness but little assistance in examining one's experience—result in increased pressure, or does the value of peer relationships increase to compensate for the lack of programmatic interpersonal holding? What influence, if any, does students' personalities or learning styles have on the personalization process? Does it affect their progression through stages of adult development (Kegan, 1982)?

This was not a study of a course efficacy in achieving a set of short- or long-term outcomes. Such a study would require a control or comparison group, and pre- and postprogram measurement of the outcomes of interest. In addition, our study scope and data do not allow us to make claims as to how the insights gained affected participants' experience and leadership after the MBA. Studies with a longer time frame may address this limitation. Research may test the relationship between engagement in the personalization process and quantifiable outcomes of job search efficacy, psychological well-being, identification with the school—upon graduation and later on—and, most important, subjective perceptions and others' observations of leadership ability. Another research avenue is the extent to which the ability to sustain reflective engagement, which resulted from the interaction between individuals' work and institutional container, is affected by the "holding" provided by the organizations to which students transition. Whether they consider this to be an individual skill, or acknowledge its dependence on a number of conditions in the social context, may affect its long-term sustainability.

Finally, future research may also explore whether curricula designed to personalize learning provide a venue for "identity control" (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002) by fostering compliance with the ideal of the "self-aware leader," or whether, conversely, they support emancipation by allowing students to critically examine the social influences that shape their experience and ambitions. In our study, the latter appeared to be most often the case, as the PDE maintained a subversive appeal among students. Future studies, however, may clarify the conditions in which such courses are coopted for the purpose of conformity or resistance to insecurity-provoking social structures and discourses (Collinson, 2003; Coutu, 2002; Gagnon, 2008).

REFERENCES

Alvesson, M., & Willmott, H. 2002. Identity regulation as organizational control: producing the appropriate individual. ***Journal of Management Studies,*** 39: 619–644.

Atkinson, R. 1998. ***The life story interview.*** Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Avolio, B. J., & Hannah, S. T. 2008. Developmental readiness: Accelerating leader development. ***Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research,*** 60: 331–347.

Bennis, W. G., & O'Toole, J. 2005. How business schools lost their way. ***Harvard Business Review,*** 83: 96–104.

Bennis, W. G., & Thomas, R. J. 2002. Crucibles of leadership. ***Harvard Business Review,*** 80: 39–45.

Berglas, S. 2002. The very real dangers of executive coaching. ***Harvard Business Review,*** 80: 86–92.

Boyatzis, R. E., Stubbs, E. C., & Taylor, S. N. 2002. Learning cognitive and emotional intelligence competencies through graduate management education. ***Academy of Management Learning and Education,*** 1: 150–162.

Carroll, B., & Levy, L. 2010. Leadership development as identity construction. ***Management Communications Quarterly,*** 24: 211–231.

Collingwood, H. 2001. Know thyself. ***Harvard Business Review,*** 79: 8.

Collinson, D. L. 2003. Identities and insecurities: Selves at work. ***Organization,*** 10: 527–547.

Coutu, D. L. 2002. The anxiety of learning. An interview with Edgar H. Schein. ***Harvard Business Review,*** 80: 2–8.

Coutu, D., & Kauffman, C. 2009. What can coaches do for you? ***Harvard Business Review,*** 87: 91–97.

Day, D. V. 2001. Leadership development: A review in context. ***Leadership Quarterly,*** 11: 581–613.

Day, D. V. 2010. The difficulties of learning from experience and the need for deliberate practice. ***Industrial and Organizational Psychology,*** 3: 41–44.

Day, D. V., & Harrison, M. M. 2007. A multilevel, identity-based approach to leadership development. ***Human Resource Management Review,*** 17: 360–373.

Day, D. V., Harrison, M. M., & Halpin, S. H. 2009. ***An integrative approach to leader development: Connecting adult development, identity and expertise.*** London: Routledge.

DeRue, D. S., & Ashford, S. 2010a. Who will lead and who will follow? A social process of leadership identity construction in organizations. ***Academy of Management Review,*** 35: 627–647.

DeRue, D. S., & Ashford, S. 2010b. Power to the people. Where has personal agency gone in leadership development? ***Industrial and Organizational Psychology,*** 3: 24–27.

DeRue, D. S., & Wellman, N. 2009. Developing leaders via experience: The role of developmental challenge, learning orientation, and feedback availability. ***Journal of Applied Psychology,*** 94: 859–875.

Dominick, P. G., Squires, P., & Cervone, D. 2010. Back to persons: On social-cognitive processes and products of leadership development experiences. ***Industrial and Organizational Psychology,*** 3: 33–37.

Dragoni, L., Tesluk, P. E., Russell, Y. E. A., & Oh, I. 2009. Understanding managerial development: Integrating developmental assignments, learning orientation, and access to developmental opportunities in predicting managerial competencies. ***Academy of Management Journal,*** 52: 731–743.

Dubouloy, M. 2004. The transitional space and self-recovery: A psychoanalytical approach to high potential managers' training. ***Human Relations,*** 57: 467–496.

Gagnon, S. 2008. Compelling identity: Selves and insecurity in global, corporate management development. ***Management Learning,*** 39: 375–391.

George, B. 2011. Authentic leadership development. In S. Snook, N. Nohria, & R. Khurana (Eds.), ***The handbook for teaching leadership.*** Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

George, B., Sims, P., McLean, A. N., & Mayer, D. 2007. Discovering your authentic leadership. ***Harvard Business Review,*** 85: 129–138.

Ghoshal, S. 2005. Bad management theories are destroying good management practice. ***Academy of Management Learning and Education,*** 4: 75–91.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. 1967. ***The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.*** New York: Aldine.

Gosling, J., & Mintzberg, H. 2006. Management education—as if both matter. ***Management Learning,*** 37: 419–428.

Hackman, J. R., & Wageman, R. 2007. Asking the right questions about leadership. Discussion and conclusion. ***The American Psychologist,*** 62: 43–47.

Hall, D. T. 2004. Self awareness, identity and leader development. In D. V. Day, S. J. Zaccaro, & S. M. Halpin (Eds.), ***Leader development for transforming organizations: Growing leaders for tomorrow:*** 153–170. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Hart, V., Blattner, J., & Leipsic, S. 2001. Coaching versus therapy: A perspective. ***Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research,*** 53: 229–237.

Hogan, R., & Warrenfeltz, R. 2003. Educating the modern manager. ***Academy of Management Learning and Education,*** 2: 74–84.

Hoover, J. D., Giambatista, R. C., Sorenson, R. L., & Bommer, W. C. 2010. Assessing the effectiveness of whole person learning pedagogy in skill acquisition. ***Academy of Management Learning & Education,*** 9: 192–203.

Ibarra, H. 2003. Working identity. ***Unconventional strategies for reinventing your career.*** Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Ibarra, H. 2007. Identity transitions: Possible selves, liminality and the dynamics of voluntary career changes. ***INSEAD Working Paper 2007/31/OB***.

Ibarra, H., Snook, S., & Guillen Ramo, L. 2010. Identity-based leader development. In R. Khurana, & N. Noria (Eds.), ***Leadership: Advancing an intellectual discipline:*** 657–678. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Kahn, W. A. 1990. Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. ***Academy of Management Journal,*** 33: 692–724.

Kaiser, R. B., & Kaplan, R. B. 2006. The deeper work of executive development: Outgrowing sensitivities. ***Academy of Management Learning and Education,*** 5: 463–483.

Kegan, R. 1982. ***The evolving self: Problem and process in human development.*** Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Kets de Vries, M. F. R. 2005a. Organizations on the couch: A clinical perspective on organizational dynamics. ***European Management Journal,*** 22: 183–200.

Kets de Vries, M. F. R. 2005b. Leadership group coaching in action: The Zen of creating high performance teams. ***Academy of Management Executives,*** 1: 61–76.

Kets de Vries, M. F. R. 2005c. The dangers of feeling like a fake. ***Harvard Business Review,*** 83: 108–116.

Kets de Vries, M., & Korotov, K. 2007. Creating transformational executive education programs. ***Academy of Management Learning and Education,*** 6: 375–387.

Khurana, R. 2007. ***From higher aims to hired hands: The social transformation of American business schools and the unfulfilled promise of management as a profession.*** Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Kilburg, R. R. 2004. When shadows fall: Using psychodynamic approaches in executive coaching. ***Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research,*** 56: 246–268.

Kolb, D. A. 1984. ***Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development.*** Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Ligon, G. S., & Hunter, S. T. 2010. Putting the development into experiential development. ***Industrial and Organizational Psychology,*** 3: 28–32.

Locke, K. 2001. ***Grounded theory in management research.*** London: Sage.

Lord, R. G., & Hall, R. J. 2005. Identity, deep structure and the development of leadership skills. ***The Leadership Quarterly,*** 16: 591–615.

Louis, M. R. 1980. Surprise and sense making: What newcomers experience in entering unfamiliar organizational settings. ***Administrative Science Quarterly,*** 25: 226–251.

Luthans, F., & Avolio, B. J. 2003. Authentic leadership development. In K. S. Cameron, J. E. Dutton, & R. E. Quinn (Eds.), ***Positive organizational scholarship:*** 241–261. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Lyons, D. 2002. Freer to be me: The development of executives at midlife. ***Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research,*** 54: 12–17.

McCall, M. W. 1998. ***High flyers: Developing the next generation of leaders.*** Cambridge, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

McCall, M. W. 2010. Recasting leadership development. ***Industrial and Organizational Psychology,*** 3: 3–19.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. 1994. ***Qualitative data analysis: An expanded source book.*** New York: Sage.

Mintzberg, H. 2004. ***Managers not MBAs.*** San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler.

Mintzberg, H., & Gosling, J. 2002. Educating managers beyond borders. ***Academy of Management Learning and Education,*** 1: 64–76.

Mirvis, P. 2008. Executive development through consciousness-raising experiences. ***Academy of Management Learning and Education,*** 7: 173–188.

Mumford, M. D., & Manley, G. G. 2003. Putting the development in leadership development: Implications for theory and practice. In S. E. Murphy, & R. E. Riggio (Eds.), ***The future of leadership development:*** 237–261. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Noe, R. A., Tews, M. J., & McConnell Dachner, A. 2010. Learner engagement: A new perspective for enhancing our understanding of learner motivation and workplace learning. ***Academy of Management Annals,*** 4: 279–315.

Parker, P., Hall, D. T., & Kram, K. E. 2008. Peer coaching. A relational process for accelerating career learning. ***Academy of Management Learning & Education,*** 7: 487–503.

Petriglieri, G. 2011. Identity workspaces for leadership development. In S. Snook, N. Nohria, & R. Khurana (Eds.), ***The handbook for teaching leadership:*** 295–312. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

Petriglieri, G., & Petriglieri, J. L. 2010. Identity workspaces: The case of business schools. ***Academy of Management Learning & Education,*** 9: 44–60.

Petriglieri, G., & Wood, J. D. 2005. Learning for leadership: The "engineering" and "clinical" approaches. In P. Strebel, & T. Keys (Eds.), ***Mastering executive education: How to combine content with context and emotion:*** 140–154. London: Financial Times-Prentice Hall.

Petriglieri, J. L., & Petriglieri, G. 2007. ***Katelyn Neilson, MBA.*** INSEAD Case N. 09/2007-5346.

Pfeffer, J., & Fong, C. T. 2002. The end of business schools? Less success than meets the eye. ***Academy of Management Learning and Education,*** 1: 78–95.

Podolny, J. M. 2009. The buck stops (and starts) at business school. ***Harvard Business Review,*** 87: 62–67.

Portnow, K., Popp, N., Broderick, M., Drago-Severson, E., & Kegan, R. 1998. Transformational learning in adulthood. ***Focus on Basics,*** 2(D): 22–27.

Raelin, J. A. 2007. Towards an epistemology of practice. ***Academy of Management Learning and Education,*** 6: 495–519.

Reynolds, M., & Vince, R. 2004. Organizing reflection: An introduction. In M. Reynolds, & R. Vince (Eds.), ***Organizing reflection:*** 1–14. Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate.

Rynes, S. L., Trank, C. Q., Lawson, A. M., & Ilies, R. 2003. Behavioral coursework in business education: Growing evidence of legitimacy crisis. ***Academy of Management Learning and Education,*** 2: 269–283.

Schein, E. H. 1990. ***Career anchors: Discovering your real values.*** San Diego: University Associates.

Schön, D. A. 1983. ***The reflective practitioner: How professionals think in action.*** London: Maurice Temple Smith.

Shamir, B., & Eilam, G. 2005. "What's your story?" A life-stories approach to authentic leadership development. ***Leadership Quarterly,*** 16: 395–417.

Sherman, S., & Freas, A. 2004. The wild west of executive coaching. ***Harvard Business Review,*** 83: 82–90.

Snook, S. 2007. Leader(ship) development. ***Harvard Business School Note n. 408-064.***

Spencer, L. M., & Spencer, S. M. 1993. ***Competence at work.*** New York: Wiley.

Spradley, J. P. 1979. ***The ethnographic interview.*** Wadsworth Group, Thomas Learning.

Starkey, K., & Tempest, S. 2009. The winter of our discontent—The design challenge for business schools. ***Academy of Management Learning & Education,*** 8: 576–586.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. 1990. ***Basics of qualitative research.*** Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Torbert, W., & Fisher, D. 1992. Autobiographical awareness as a catalyst for managerial and organisational development. ***Management Learning,*** 23: 184–198.

Winnicott, D. W. 1975. Transitional objects and transitional phenomena. In ***Through paediatrics to psychoanalysis:*** 229–242. London, U.K: Karnac. (Originally published 1953).

Wood, J. D., & Petriglieri, G. 2005a. On coaches, counsellors, facilitators and behavioural consultants. In P. Strebel, & T. Keys (Eds.), ***Mastering executive education: How to combine content with context and emotion:*** 155–169. London: Financial Times-Prentice Hall.

Wood, J. D., & Petriglieri, G. 2005b. Fundamental for a world class leadership programme. In P. Strebel, & T. Keys (Eds.), ***Mastering executive education: How to combine content with context and emotion:*** 364–380. London, U.K: Financial Times-Prentice Hall.

Gianpiero Petriglieri (Gianpiero.petriglieri@insead.edu) is associate professor of organizational behavior at INSEAD in Fontainebleau, France. He holds an MD with specialization in psychiatry from the University of Catania Medical School, Italy. His areas of interest include leadership development, group dynamics, and experiential learning.

Jack Denfeld Wood (jack.wood@imd.ch) is professor of leadership and organizational behaviour at IMD in Lausanne, Switzerland. He received his PhD in organizational behavior from Yale University. His areas of interest include leadership, the structure and dynamics of groups, and ideology.

Jennifer Louise Petriglieri (jpetriglieri@hbs.edu) is a postdoctoral fellow in organizational behavior at the Harvard Business School. She received her PhD in organizational behavior from INSEAD. Her current research explores identity dynamics in organizations and professions in crisis, the social function of business schools, and the dynamics of identity development in management education.