

This version is available at http://eprints.hud.ac.uk/29234/

The University Repository is a digital collection of the research output of the University, available on Open Access. Copyright and Moral Rights for the items on this site are retained by the individual author and/or other copyright owners. Users may access full items free of charge; copies of full text items generally can be reproduced, displayed or performed and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided:

- The authors, title and full bibliographic details is credited in any copy;
- A hyperlink and/or URL is included for the original metadata page; and
- The content is not changed in any way.

For more information, including our policy and submission procedure, please contact the Repository Team at: E.mailbox@hud.ac.uk.
Dear Author/Editor,

Greetings, and thank you for publishing with SAGE. Your article has been copyedited, and we have a few queries for you. Please respond to these queries when you submit your changes to the Production Editor.

Thank you for your time and effort.

NOTE: Please answer the queries by editing within the article: follow the AQ hyperlink below and edit the text directly. Add a "New Comment" (in the "Review" tab), if the correction cannot be done directly or for further queries.

Below, please tick the boxes to the right of the query, to indicate the query has been dealt with.

Please assist us by clarifying the following queries:

Please confirm that all author information, including names, affiliations, sequence, and contact details, is correct. [☑]

Please review the entire document for typographical errors, mathematical errors, and any other necessary corrections; check headings, tables, and figures. [☑]

Please ensure that you have obtained and enclosed all necessary permissions for the reproduction of artworks (e.g. illustrations, photographs, charts, maps, other visual material, etc.) Not owned by yourself. Please refer to your publishing agreement for further information. [☑]

Please note that this proof represents your final opportunity to review your article prior to publication, so please do send all of your changes now. [☑]

** AQ1 **

'Lawler and Gold (2016)' is not listed in the references. Please provide reference details. **

** This is a chapter in the book being reviewed so only the page references are provided. **

** AQ2 **

'Denison et al. (1995)' is not listed in the references. Please provide reference details. **

** Done **

**
**Book review**


Reviewed by: Julie Davies, University of Huddersfield, UK

As a human resource (HR) subject group leader, I’m naturally drawn to *Leadership Paradoxes*. The book encourages the reader to critique rational approaches to paradoxes in leadership and provides a model of academic leadership to view the world from different angles, as its gravity-defying cover based on Escher’s ‘Relativity’ print indicates. This edited collection is neither a textbook nor a prescriptive guide. It is written as supplementary reading for advanced undergraduate, postgraduate, and post-experience students: (a) to stimulate new thinking and debate; (b) to encourage wider reading of paradox and ambiguity; and (c) to consider how paradoxes impact leadership. At a time when many of us are perplexed/confounded by the Brexit referendum vote, Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist attacks, and Trump’s nomination for the US presidency, a key message is that organisational leaders/managers can reframe and embrace paradoxes not as problems to solve but as opportunities. The editors seek ‘to introduce some of the paradoxes of leadership and to suggest some ways that leaders and organisations may learn to live with them’ (p. 5). The chapters (of around 20 pages each) persuade us to adopt interconnected, interdependent, and globalised viewpoints in turbulent times. Bolden et al. argue that powerful and influential individuals use control as an illusion to maintain their status and position. We are invited to consider the social construction of ‘realities’ and to adopt synergistic, holistic ‘and ... and’ rather than ‘either ... or’ perspectives. The authors admit the chapters are designed to provide more questions than answers as ‘provocations and catalysts for further enquiry’. I think this makes it uncomfortable reading for those students who prefer seeking positivistic, quantitative and normative methodologies/prescriptions. They will probably be grateful, however, for the book’s insights when they encounter messy, apparently insurmountable problems in their working lives. Indeed, after all, we can all recognise apparent workplace contradictions such as when stress enhances productivity, less is more, and tough love is required/mobilises action.

The nine contributors (three women) comprise scholars and practitioners with diverse industry and international experiences, mostly linked by their association with the University of Exeter Business School’s Centre for Leadership Studies in the United Kingdom. Helpfully, the introduction (p. 1) includes an Oxford English Dictionary definition of paradox as a seemingly absurd though perhaps well-founded statement; self-contradictory or essentially absurd statement; person or thing conflicting with pre-conceived notions of what is reasonable or possible.
Each chapter consists of an opening summary, plus questions for reflection and discussion, with recommended reading sections and references. The book’s complementary website www.leadershipparadoxes.com (no login required) includes a sample of Chapter 1, as well as relevant video, slide, and other web links in each chapter summary, and @lshipparadoxes twitter updates.

The chapters are organised around seven main paradoxes:

Chapter 2 Leadership: people need but don’t want leaders
Chapter 3 Perspective: decontextualising leadership may destroy it; leadership is more than just about studying leaders; invisible leadership may be the most effective
Chapter 4 Team and time: leaders must be simultaneously in the present and look to the future while being a part of and apart from the team
Chapter 5 Heroic leadership: our heroes are often fictional or dead
Chapter 6 Distortion: in attempting to control events, leaders lose control
Chapter 7 Authenticity can result in inauthenticity; it is not just about being ourselves as we have multiple identities in different contexts that change over time
Chapter 8 Right and wrong: when faced by ethical dilemmas, our values may conflict and outcomes appear unclear

Each chapter comprises an opening summary, questions for reflection and discussion, recommended reading and references. The complementary web site www.leadershipparadoxes.com (no login required) includes a sample of chapter 1, as well as relevant video, slide and other web links within each chapter summary, and twitter updates.

The first chapter advises us not to reconcile paradoxes but to ‘accept them as wholes and learn to live with them and manage them’ (p. 4). The three editors explain later that ‘manage’ originated from putting a horse through its paces in the form of a partnership (p. 152).

In the second chapter, Witzel argues that although we need them, we tend to resist leaders’ control. He advises us to discard ‘the false authority of transformational leadership and the false humility of personal leadership’ (p. 27). Witzel comments that leadership (and followership) is essentially relational, ‘something you do with’. His argument that ‘genuine paradoxes are ultimately futile [and] ... cannot be resolved’ (p. 26) is echoed throughout the book.

In the third chapter, Bolden presents three paradoxes: (1) the essence of leadership is lost by attempts to measure it; (2) less attention to leaders enhances our understanding of leadership; and (3) effective leadership results from followers believing they achieved success without leaders. This chapter provides more solid academic journal articles than some of the practitioner-penned essays. For those like me who encourage students to annotate diagrams, the sailing and sinking ships representing academic leadership (pp. 42–43) are insightful illustrations of commercial and professional paradoxes. This chapter mentions critical management scholarship and the African concept of ‘Ubuntu’ (Zulu: ‘I am because we are’, p. 36).

In Chapter 4, Linacre emphasises leadership both within and separate from the group. Linacre explains that most leaders understand that ‘A leader without a team is like a cox without oarsmen and women’ (p. 56). The co-editor explores the paradox of simultaneously attending to the present and future. Linacre counsels leaders to keep in touch with reality and to discuss the ‘undiscussable’ while working towards a common purpose that ‘provides the bridge into the future’ (p. 68).

In Chapter 5, US co-authors Allison and Cecilone discuss the energising effects of fictional heroes’ journeys. Six paradoxes are presented: (1) that the truest heroes are fictional; (2) the greatest heroism is unseen; (3) our leaders choose us and tune into our needs; (4) we
love to build up then destroy our heroes; (5) a hero’s death increases our affection for them; and (6) rule-breakers, risk-takers and fearless high-functioning psychopaths are appealing. The authors observe that mentors transform others by exploring suffering in leadership journeys and that ironically ‘the ultimate paradox of leadership may reside in the idea that one must “give it away to keep it”’ (p. 87).

For Chapter 6, Lawler and Gold evoke Wittgenstein’s metaphor of a river and riverbanks creating each other. The scholars argue that leaders must gain first-hand experience of an organisation’s ‘noise’, its backwaters, turbulence and overflows, to gauge how they go with the flow and change its direction. They critique research on leaders’ competences, advocate distributed leadership, and debunk the myth that leaders ever gain full control. Lawler and Gold (2016) portray leadership as ‘adding to the flow of energy’ through story telling about successes while allowing for the ‘paradox of distortions’ (p. 109). This chapter includes a useful stakeholder mapping exercise (p. 98) and two case studies.

Chapter 7 on the psychological paradoxes of authenticity and inconsistencies suggests that authenticity is not about ‘being yourself’. Adarves-Yorno promotes leadership development through mindfulness and introspection, detachment, and ‘fluid authenticity’. Within four paradoxes, she asserts that (i) authenticity is context dependent and leaders who candidly admit to their lack of confidence can lose legitimacy; (ii) we have multiple expressions of authenticity and identities; (iii) contradictions arise from leaders manifesting different aspects of their authentic selves; and (iv) over time, we experience marked oscillations from a fixed self-image. Adarves-Yorno’s enthusiasm for ‘inner training’ may resonate well with students who are undergoing transitions from technical specialist to general people management roles.

For the penultimate chapter, Board explores the ‘paradox of right and wrong’ when our values conflict. Drawing on examples from religion, English literature, science, and corporate engineering failure, she presents ethical dilemmas based on utilitarianism, rules, and care. Board reflects on moral courage and whistleblowing, concluding that our survival depends on our capacity to embrace uncertainty and learning from life’s paradoxes.

In the final chapter, the editors focus on negative capability, that is, our ability to accept uncertainties without needing to be rational. They consider socially constructed leadership, wicked problems, complexity, and boundary spanners. Bolden et al. reiterate that ‘paradox demands us to embrace uncertainty and ambiguity and to hold multiple possibilities in our minds at the same time’ (p. 153). The authors encourage reflection, debate and critical engagement in order to facilitate alternative ways of seeing and understanding the world (p. 154). They recommend systematic and holistic thinking and reiterate that paradoxes offer energising possibilities.

What I like about this book is its focus on leadership and paradoxes as distinct from paradoxical leadership (Lavine, 2014; Smith et al., 2012). The web-site and end-of-chapter questions are useful for researchers and workshop facilitators. The range of citations is diverse, from physicists, philosophers, TED Talks, and political, historical and contemporary events. If using this book with students, I would add definitions of paradox by management scholars. For instance, Schad et al. (2016) define paradox as the ‘persistent contradiction between interdependent elements’ (p. 10), while Cameron and Quinn (1988) assert that paradoxes ‘seem logical in isolation but absurd and irrational when appearing simultaneously’ (p. 760).

While the book states the seven core paradoxes in each of the main essay titles, it is confusing that some chapters present even more paradoxes. A summary of all the paradoxes highlighted would be useful in addition to specific organisational illustrations of Quine’s three categories of paradox. While key concepts such as followership, distributed, team, heroic, authentic and ethical leadership, and traits and styles (p. 8) are mentioned, in future editions of
In conclusion, **this book and these essays tackle** problem-centred and thought-provoking. **Leadership Paradoxes** meets its stated objective of making us consider how paradoxes affect leadership. We are encouraged to question our assumptions about the elusive and dynamic phenomenon of effective and ethical leadership in uncertain contexts. I would expect advanced-level business school students to demonstrate critical engagement with top academic journal articles, especially within strategic management literature beyond references provided in the book, however. **Overall, Leadership Paradoxes certainly** stimulates ‘rethinking’ of how we frame paradox within well-trodden perspectives of leadership as contingent, complex, distributed and relational. Students with an action-bias may be frustrated by the authors’ recommendations to be mindful, not in control, and to **embrace** rather than view them as difficulties to solve. As educators, however, we must learn to challenge our students to be reflexive, courageous, curious and contextually sensitive as paradigms and centres of gravity shift. Of course, we are **all** familiar with working in ‘an uncertain world’ as the term VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity) has been in common use since the late 1990s. Nevertheless, this book is to be commended for reminding us that an understanding of leadership requires us to live with absurdities and **continually** question leadership practices and development. The companion web-site provides an excellent forum for further dialogue. **Overall, Bolden et al.’s Leadership Paradoxes is a timely text in a post-heroic age as we strive to grapple with** converging physical, digital, and biological **spheres** in the fourth industrial revolution (Schwab, 2016).

**References**


