



Pioneering New Fields of Study: Lessons and Reflections from the Nascent Field of Global Leadership

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Abstract

Background and Objectives: In the hope that other scholars can learn from our experiences, we share the strategies and steps we have taken to advance the nascent field of global leadership over the past two and a half decades. **Approach:** We begin by discussing the meaning and requirements of a field of study. After identifying the external drivers that enabled global leadership's growth, we mention the individual champions who devoted time and effort to growing the field. We acknowledge global leadership's multidisciplinary roots and the challenges of creating a construct definition that distinguishes global leadership from related fields. **Results/Conclusion:** We acknowledge the major contributions that emerged from a partnership with Emerald Group Publishing's *Advances in Global Leadership* series and discuss the variety of approaches we took to expand the field's reach within the social sciences.

Keywords: global leadership, birthing new fields of study, multi-disciplinary fields of study, theory-building, construct definition

Paper type: Critical Essay, Perspective & Reflection Essay

"We are not students of some subject matter but students of problems. One's problems may cut right across the boundaries of any subject matter or discipline"
(Popper, 1962, p. 67).

Introduction

As Karl Popper's quotation states, a field like global leadership definitely deals with problems that "cut across the boundaries of any subject matter or discipline." This might explain why many of the scholars who write on this topic are cross-cultural management scholars housed in schools of business with some type of international experience in their background and a propensity for cross-disciplinary collaboration. We know from observation that some new fields persist while others fade (e.g., Crocq, 2013; McGail, 2021), but there is surprisingly little research on the topic of how academics or administrators develop a new field of study.

The closest model might be the practical lessons for building a research community and developing a coherent field of study in the new field of teacher leadership (Berg, Carver & Mangin, 2018). However, few of the steps they reported compared to the trajectory we experienced in growing the field of global leadership. We found in their work some practical suggestions for modifying the focus of university departments in response to a changing environment. For example, the University of Uruguay modified their development studies program by adopting an interdisciplinary focus on research, teaching, and institution building (Arocena & Sutaz, 2016). Although the field of global leadership has multidisciplinary roots in the fields of intercultural communication competence, expatriation, global management, and comparative leadership (Osland, 2018), it is more likely that individual global leadership teachers (or traditional leadership teachers who are branching out to teach a global leadership course) seldom need to figure out how to work with professors from those other disciplines. Usually, they simply educate themselves by reading global leadership texts that explain the field's multidisciplinary roots or seek out advice or key readings in the other disciplines.

Our purpose in this paper is to explain how and why the field of global leadership developed in the hope that it provides a potential pathway for other scholars engaged in novel research. A secondary purpose is to encourage scholars to carry out global leadership research.

The Definition and Role of Fields of Study

Most scholars identify themselves as belonging to a specific 'field of study,' but are seldom called upon to reflect on what that term implies or requires. Kuhn (1970) maintained that each field of study should have its own paradigm to allow for more advanced research and that their existence is a sign of maturity and development within a scientific field. He defined paradigms as "universally recognized scientific achievements that for a time provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners"

(Kuhn, 1970, p. viii). Based on Kuhn's 1970 definition, Anand, Larson, & Mahoney (2020) observe that paradigms are the constellation of the "fundamental ideas, methods, language, and theories that are accepted by the members of a scientific community," and are critical to a field's progress given that "no natural history can be interpreted in the absence of at least some implicit body of intertwined theoretical and methodological belief that permits selection, evaluation, and criticism" (Kuhn, 1970, pp. 16–17). Sulkowski & Lenart-Gansiniec (2025: 1) provide the following overarching summary of the concept: "a paradigm is a valid worldview, a way of seeing the world" within the cadre of researchers within a given discipline.

As research in a scientific field progresses, findings often occur that are not easily explained by or are not in conceptual harmony with the accepted paradigm. If such findings accumulate, they may cause a "paradigm shift" in the field. "This process can include revision or rejection of previously accepted theories and the emergence of new theoretical frameworks. Consequently, paradigm shifts drive progress and improvement in the state of knowledge about management science" (Sulkowski & Lenart-Gansiniec, 2025, pp. 1–2).

The field of global leadership does not yet have one paradigm universally accepted by all researchers; it is in what some scholars call a "pre-paradigmatic" phase. This is common for an emerging field. Kuhn notes that:

History suggests that the road to a firm research consensus is extraordinarily arduous... In the absence of a paradigm or some candidate for paradigm, all of the facts that could possibly pertain to the development of a given science are likely to seem equally relevant. As a result, early fact-gathering is a far more random activity than the one that subsequent scientific development makes familiar. (Kuhn, 1970, p. 15).

Despite being in a pre-paradigmatic phase, the nascent field of global leadership does meet some of the other requirements for a social scientific field. For example, Darden (1978) argued that fields of study need the following: a central problem, a domain of items accepted as facts related to that problem, general explanatory factors, expectations about how problems should be solved along with techniques and methods for doing so, and concepts, laws and theories related to the central problem. The central problem of global leadership is determining how to simultaneously lead effectively within and across organizations, nations, and cultures in complex environments in an overarching global context.

Given the wide variety of problems that global leaders face and the way the field has developed, we found Cassadevall and Fang's (2015) definition and description of fields of study very helpful. They define fields of study, not just as topic matter, but as *a fundamental sociological unit of science* (Cassadevall & Fang, 2015), since members themselves choose where they want to specialize and with whom they want to work. Their acceptance depends in part on others working in the field. In addition to providing a sense of belonging and community to researchers, fields of study maintain information and

provide normative standards for scientific work. Although there is limited research concerning why new fields of study are born and how they develop, Cassadevall and Fang (2015) suggest that they occur naturally as both information and scientific specialization increases, aided by the growth of research communities with similar interests.

Thus, a scientific field can be defined as a collection of individuals with a common interest in some aspect of science who regularly interact and hold common interests and goals (Cassadevall & Fang, 2015). New fields of study come into being and progress by defining important problems to tackle that are often in response to a “grand challenge” or an external significant “felt need” within the context of an existing field (George, Howard-Grenville, Joshi, & Tihanyi, 2016). This was true for the field of global leadership and the dynamics of its formation will be summarized in the next section. Our experience in participating in the formation of the field of global leadership is that the human element is essential to building a field of study and the following sections discuss how both subject matter and human choices and interactions contributed to developing the current state of the field of global leadership.

Phase 1: Existence of a Felt Need

We argue that at least two prerequisites must be in place for the birth of a new field: 1) external conditions that legitimize the field (drivers) and 2) individuals who see the need for development and are willing to work at building the field (champions).

External Drivers

The exponential increase in all the following drivers in the late 1990s to the early 2000s created the need for global leadership competence in both international and domestic organizations: globalization’s impact in terms of global exports’ percentage of world GDP, foreign sales, Foreign Direct Investment, access to formerly closed countries like China, global supply chains, and the rapid development of electronic technologies. Previously, it was primarily expatriates and diplomats who were concerned with how to lead and manage people from other countries. However, globalization meant that many more managers had to rapidly acquire global leadership skills, regardless of their physical location, and they also had to deal with the increased complexity of a globalized world. Lane, Maznevski, and Mendenhall (2004) argued that this complexity consists of four components: 1) *multiplicity* (the number and type of issues that must be dealt with), 2) *interdependence* (the necessity of dealing with more and different competitors, customers, governments, stakeholders, and NGOs), 3) *ambiguity* (lack of information clarity, unclear cause-and-effect relationships, and equivocality regarding information), all of which occur in an environment characterized by 4) *flux* (an environment characterized by non-linear, ongoing shifting in terms of system dynamics, values, organizational structure, industry trends, and socio-political stability). Another external driver was the push by AACSB (the accrediting body for business schools in higher education) in the mid-1980s for business schools to carry out more international research. This paved the way for global leadership research to be viewed as important and

legitimate in academe. External drivers are necessary, but insufficient for a new field to germinate. People, in the form of champions, are also needed to spearhead new fields.

Champions

Academic champions are scholars who see the necessity for research in a new area and devote their time and effort to both leading and researching that field. Champions constitute a critical mass of scholars who are willing to leave behind, to some degree, the comfort of their established research streams to risk entering unexplored realms where established research domains, norms, and publishing protocols may not yet exist. Historically, some of the earliest publications on global leaders were interviews or practitioner-oriented articles written by consultant-scholars. The first empirical global leadership research surfaced in the 1990s, with some of the seminal work being done by scholars (who previously had focused their research efforts largely in expatriate effectiveness, general leadership, and cross-cultural management) such as: Wills and Barham (1994), Young and Ready (1995), Adler (1997), Black, Morrison and Gregersen (1999), and Kets de Vries and Florent-Treacy (1999). Some of these foundational researchers continue to publish in the field. For recent reviews of global leadership research, see Osland, Neilsen, Mendenhall & Bird (2020) and Osland (2018).

Phase 2: Individual and Team Efforts to Develop Global Leadership as a Field of Study

In addition to researching and publishing on global leadership, many other scholars helped develop the field in a variety of ways. Beginning in 2001, we began working with a loosely-coupled team of researchers at different universities who actively collaborated to advance the emergent field of global leadership: Nancy Adler, Allan Bird, Paula Caligiuri, Harry Lane, Martha Maznevski, Mark Mendenhall, Rikki Nielsen, Gary Oddou, Asbjorn Osland, Joyce Osland, Sebastian Reiche, Günter Stahl, Michael Stevens, Betina Szkudlarek, and Sully Taylor. Most had prior experience working and living abroad, which explained their interest and dedication to this new field of study. As you can see from the following examples, some champions had academic chairs or positions focused on leadership, which made it possible for them to support this field within the university setting.

- For instance, Mark Mendenhall's chaired position at the University of Tennessee-Chattanooga allowed him to convene in 2001 what was probably the first meeting of scholars on the topic of global leadership. He challenged them to create a model of global leadership development, which resulted in what came to be known as the "Chattanooga Model of Global Leadership Development" (Mendenhall, Osland, Bird, Oddou, Stevens, Maznevski & Stahl, 2007).
- Another team effort that contributed some of the basic building blocks for the new field of global leadership occurred when Harry Lane, Martha Maznevski, and Mark Mendenhall co-edited a book on global management, entitled *The Blackwell Handbook of Global Management* (2004). The book was co-written with members of the International Organizations Network (ION), a loosely

coupled organization of international management scholars. Years later, Mark made another significant contribution by publishing the online global leadership teaching techniques he developed in 2019.

- A writing collaboration led by Mark Mendenhall also produced four editions of *Global Leadership: Research, Practice and Development* (2008, 2013, 2018, and 2026) with co-authors Joyce Osland, Allan Bird, Gary Oddou, Martha Maznevski, Guenter Stahl, and Michael Stevens. This compendium, which updates the primary research areas in global leadership, is frequently used in doctoral programs.
- Both the history and the predicted future of the field of global leadership can be found in the *SAGE Handbook of Contemporary Cross-Cultural Management* (Osland, Neilsen, Mendenhall & Bird, 2020).
- Allan Bird's chaired position at Northeastern University enabled him to host some annual global leadership conferences for academics, practitioners, and students.
- Nancy Adler publicized an innovative transdisciplinary program at the Lahore University of Management Sciences in Pakistan that partners with communities and external organizations to provide students with practical experience that builds global leadership skills. The program's founder, Dr. Arshad Ahmad, was honored as the 2022 Academy of International Business International Educator of the Year (Arshad & Adler, 2025).
- Joyce Osland's position as the Lucas Endowed Professor of Global Leadership at San Jose State University allowed her to co-found and direct the Global Leadership Advancement Center and Global Leadership Lab (GLLab) for twelve years. In addition to funding her global leadership research, this position supported a global leadership speaker series for the university and the community, certificate programs in Global Leadership for undergraduates and graduates, a Global Leadership Fellows Program for outstanding undergraduates, and an annual Global Leadership Lab exchange program with a German university, which also served as a global leadership teacher-training program for interested professors from other universities and disciplines. (Most of these programs did not survive her retirement.)

Other scholars championed the field by incorporating global leadership workshops and presentations into large academic conferences and accepting positions as journal editors and reviewers. For example, teams of global leadership scholars organized and presented professional development workshops at numerous Academy of Management conferences on topics such as: "What Is Global Leadership?" "Researching and Publishing in Global Leadership," and "Teaching Global Leadership." As a result, more scholars found their way into the field and were often offered a helping hand with respect to research and teaching. Some scholars served as guest-lecturers or visiting teachers of global leadership courses in doctoral programs that had no global leadership scholars on staff. Several senior scholars in the field actively mentored doctoral students from universities that did not have global leadership scholars on their faculties. Additionally, instructors published articles on developing global leadership courses to help teachers design global leadership courses of their own (Vora, 2020; Ly, 2022). These activities exemplify Cassadeevall and Fang's (2015) view of fields of study as a collection of individuals who both hold and interact around common interests and goals. Additionally,

these activities reflect Cassadevall and Fang's (2015) contention that outsiders – especially young scholars – to the field should be welcomed as new members and that barrier entries to entering the field should be non-existent.

Phase 3: Dealing with Obstacles and Resistance to a New Field of Study

According to Charlton (2008), the three phases on the road to acceptance of new theories are: 1) the theory is not true; 2) the theory is true, but it is unimportant; 3) the theory is true, and it is important – but we knew it all along. While we were not proposing new theory in the beginning, we did have to overcome some initial resistance to global leadership as a field of study. Cassadevall and Fang (2015) observed that if new fields gain traction and create publishing outlets, that due to the peer review process, their members can also impede progress by preventing access by outsiders and restricting new thinking, thereby sustaining dogma. Conversely, we found that this tendency operates in the opposite manner as well, when scholars researching new phenomena attempt to publish their findings in long-accepted journals in the wider field. This is not unusual in the wider field of management, as experienced for example, by qualitative researchers: (Howard-Grenville, Nelson, Vough, & Zilber, 2021; Paavilainen-Mäntymäki & Plakoyiannaki, 2025). The same was true for global leadership scholars whose early work was often rejected by the reviewers of top journals who were unwilling to consider a new paradigm outside their own field of traditional leadership. Thomas Kuhn (1970: 5) aptly summarized this tendency in academe when he observed that “normal science, for example, often suppresses fundamental novelties because they are necessarily subversive of its basic commitments” and thus undermines its foundations or requires the reconstruction of prior assumptions.

The way forward for scholars working in a new field is to simply persevere in the face of opposition, and that is what has occurred in the field of global leadership. To illustrate the growth of the field, we conducted a backward search in Google Scholar for every 10 years of articles or books or papers that had “global leadership” specifically in the title of the publication. From 2015 to 2025 the search reported “about 2,510 results.” From 2004-2014 it reported “about 1,390 results” and for publications from 1994-2004 (the general time period when the global leadership field was formed and in its infancy), it reported “about 389 results.” Finally, from 1960-1993 the search revealed “about 42 results.” This trend and the increasing number of publications that focus on global leadership as the main topic of their research seems to indicate a current acceptance of global leadership as a separate field of study from that of traditional leadership. For more critical analyses of the growth of the field please see: Mendenhall, Honorio Franco de Lima, & Burke-Smalley (2023); Mendenhall, Li, & Osland (2016); Vijayakumar et al., 2019).

Phase 4: Differentiation from Other Fields

As we mentioned in the preceding section, one of the first requirements in establishing a new field of study is to distinguish it from other fields. International scholars had studied

leadership in various ways, which led to confusion. We had to distinguish global leadership from cross-national leadership, cross-cultural leadership, and especially comparative leadership. This task was more difficult because much of the early research on global leadership was qualitative in nature and suffered from the absence of a construct definition that would distinguish it from other fields and support stricter selection practices.

Defining Global Leadership

Sebastian Reiche, Allan Bird, Mark Mendenhall and Joyce Osland assumed the challenge of creating a construct definition of global leadership. After months of hard work, they proposed the following definition of global leadership and encouraged scholars to improve upon it: “The process and actions through which an individual influences a range of internal and external constituents from multiple national cultures and jurisdictions in a context characterized by significant levels of task and relationship complexity” (Reiche, Bird, Mendenhall, & Osland, 2017, p. 556). In the same article, they created a typology of ideal roles for four types of global leaders so that scholars could distinguish them for research purposes. Whether or not this definition stands the test of time, it was developed to help prevent global leadership scholars from “comparing apples and oranges.” This means that global leadership scholars will be more likely to include only actual global leaders in their studies if they adhere to this definition when choosing participants for their research studies.

Distinguishing Global Leadership from Traditional Leadership

Part of developing the field meant explaining the difference between traditional and global leadership. We often use the analogy of traditional sports versus extreme sports: global leadership, like extreme sports, is more complex and demanding and requires additional skills. For example, McCall and Hollenbeck (2002) reported that the developmental path for global leaders differed from that of domestic leaders in that significant others and cultural experiences played a greater role. We found both similarities and differences in degree and kind (e.g., different job demands, prevalence of boundary spanning, pressure to understand a wider range of stakeholders, heightened ambiguity, and need for cultural understanding) between expert global leaders and domestic leaders (Osland, Bird, & Oddou, 2012; Osland, Oddou, Bird, & Osland, 2013).

Distinguishing Global Leadership from Global Mindset

The global mindset concept (Levy, Beechler, Taylor, & Boyacigiller, 2007) indicates that human resources need to be as complex as their environment in order to deal appropriately with diverse perspectives, strategies, and practices. Levy and her colleagues (2007) define global mindset as “a highly complex cognitive structure characterized by an openness to and articulation of multiple cultural and strategic realities on both the global and local levels, and the cognitive ability to mediate and integrate across this multiplicity” (p. 244). In our view, global mindset is a key competency of global leaders that we include in our global leadership courses. However, a key step in

developing global leadership as a field necessitated distinguishing it from global mindset. Two studies clarified this distinction – the first by Osland, Bird, Mendenhall, & Osland (2006;) and the second by Osland, Bird & Mendenhall (2013).

Distinguishing Global Leadership from Comparative Leadership

Another early criticism of global leadership was that it was not a new field of study, but simply an extension of comparative leadership. Comparative leadership is defined as “the differences in traits and practices across countries that explain what is universal in leadership versus what is uniquely influenced by country context and institutions” (Von Glinow & Schnepfer, 2013). Certainly, global leaders require a good understanding of comparative leadership with respect to the countries in which they operate and with their international employees, managers, clients, and business contacts. Otherwise, they could not comprehend and adapt to the differing leadership expectations held by people from other countries. However, understanding comparative leadership is only one aspect of the cognitive and behavioral demands made upon global leaders.

Therefore, when Joyce Osland was asked by William Mobley to take over his role as the senior editor of *Advances in Global Leadership (AGL)* in 2014, she requested that this dual book/journal series cease publishing comparative leadership research and focus solely on global leadership, in accordance with the series title. She argued that including both types of research contributed to construct confusion and that comparative leadership authors could more readily find other outlets for their work. Fortunately, Emerald agreed to the narrower focus, even though it initially meant fewer submissions. Pooja Vijayakumar subsequently spearheaded a bibliometric literature review that identified thematic patterns of leadership in the global context and clarified the difference between global leadership and comparative leadership (Vijayakumar, Morley, Heraty, Mendenhall, & Osland, 2019). These thematic patterns in global leadership research were:

- Differentiation of global leaders from domestic leaders.
- Determining the competencies that should be used as selection criteria for development programs, assignments or promotions.
- Development and/or validation of global leadership assessment instruments.
- Identification and analysis of global leader cognition.
- Construct definition of global leadership.
- Distinguishing between global managers and global leaders.

Phase 5: Answering Key Research Questions

As we look back over the years, it seems to us that Vijayakumar et. al's 2019 thematic findings coincide well with our own observations. In our experience, three key questions seemed to primarily drive research in the field in its early beginnings: 1) “What distinguishes global leaders from traditional leaders?” 2) “What competencies do global leaders need?” and 3) “How do global leaders develop their expertise?” Because definitions of traditional leadership often include change agency, some research focused on how expert global leaders dealt with global change. One research team used cognitive

task analysis (CTA) (see Crandall, Klein & Hoffman, 2006) to identify the cognitive demands on expert global leaders and learn how they think and act (Osland, 2010, 2013; Osland, J., Osland, A., Bird, & Oddou, 2013). This research stream yielded case studies, knowledge audits, and a cognitive demands table pertaining to the processes that expert global leaders employed in global change efforts (Osland, Ehret & Ruiz, 2017). Knowledge audits identified the elements of expert cognition that global leaders utilized, the cues and strategies they employed, and the perceived difficulties novices might experience (Osland, et al, 2017). This knowledge helped to distinguish global leaders from traditional leaders and contributed to both the construct definition of global leadership and global leadership development methods.

Another important contribution to the field was Bird's (2018) categorization of the 230+ competencies identified in global leadership research. While very interesting, this was too many competencies to be helpful when it came to selecting and training global leaders. He therefore divided this complexity of competencies into three conceptual categories to house them: 1) Business Knowledge and Acumen, 2) Managing People and Relationships, and 3) Managing Self. This effort enabled scholars to more clearly view the roles that specific competencies played in global leadership effectiveness and allowed for more refined competency development program design for training purposes. The research findings on expert global leaders also helped address the field's third key question concerning how global leaders develop their expertise by informing global leadership teaching methods and providing teaching cases (e.g., Osland, et al, 2017). Other foundational research in the area of global leadership development was contributed by McCall & Hollenbeck (2002); Caligiuri & Tarique (2012); Mendenhall, Weber, Arnardottir & Oddou (2017); and Dunn-Jensen, Osland, & Wells (2021).

Phase 6: Identifying Foundational Research in Global Leadership

An observation we made early was that some scholars jumped into the field without first being grounded in the history of its evolution or the seminal studies important to its growth. We began developing bibliographies and lists of seminal research for scholars entering the field. Table 1 is a shorthand version of that list.

Table 1 Examples of Foundational Studies in Global Leadership

Areas of Focus	Research
Construct Definition	Reiche, Bird, Mendenhall, & Osland (2017)
Scope of Global Leadership Tasks	Caligiuri (2006); Osland, Oddou, Bird, & Osland (2013)
Global Leadership Behaviors	Huesing & Ludema (2017); Johnson, Ludema, & Osland (2023); Hinds & Ludema (2023)
Global Leadership Competencies and Skills	Wills & Barham (1994); Black et al. (1999); Gitsham et al. (2008); Bird, Mendenhall, Stevens, & Oddou (2010); Caligiuri & Tarique (2010)

Areas of Focus	Research
Global Leadership Assessment and Instrumentation	Kets de Vries, Vrignaud, & Florent-Treacy (2004); Bird, Mendenhall, Stevens, & Oddou (2010); Bird & Stevens (2013); Cumberland, Herd, Alagaraja, & Kerrick (2016); Richter, Schlaegel, Taras, Alon, & Bird (2023)
Women Global Leaders	Adler (1997, 2001); Adler & Osland (2016)
Training & Development	McCall & Hollenbeck (2002); Caligiuri & Tarique (2012); Mendenhall, Weber, Arnardóttir, & Oddou (2017); Dunn-Jensen, Osland, & Wells (2021)
Responsible Global Leadership	Pless, Maak, & Stahl (2011, 2012); Miska, Stahl, & Mendenhall (2013); Pless & Borecka (2014); Mendenhall, Žilinskaitė, Stahl, & Clapp-Smith (2020)

Source: Authors' compilation

Phase 7: Identifying Research Gaps and Growing the Body of Research

Cassadevall & Fang (2015) argue that it is crucial for a field to define key problems and encourage scholars to continue identifying and defining its most important unsolved problems. Doing so is the first step toward finding solutions that can be generalized to practice. Furthermore, the discussions that result from simply listing problems often promotes new scientific directions. Beginning with volume 11, the AGL co-editors (Martha Maznevski, Mark Mendenhall, Joyce Osland, Sebastian Reiche, and Betina Szkudlarek) decided to take yet another step in advancing the field by choosing important global leadership research topics that were not sufficiently addressed in the extant literature for each volume. Thus, each Call for Papers announced that one could still submit on any general global leadership topic, but submissions were also solicited to fill a specific, important research gap in each volume. To be helpful to authors, they briefly mentioned existing research in the chosen problem area and provided potential research suggestions to prime the pump. Furthermore, each volume included a commissioned literature review that detailed the special topic's history and a final chapter by the editors that summarized the research progress and gaps on the topic to guide future research by scholars and doctoral students. The topics we chose to advance the field were:

- AGL 11: University Efforts Related to Global Leadership Development
- AGL 12: Foundational Global Leadership Research
- AGL 13: Interdisciplinary Research on Global Leadership
- AGL 14: Global Leadership Effectiveness
- AGL 15: Power and Global Leadership
- AGL 16: Addressing Society's Grand Challenges Through Global Leadership
- AGL 17: Resilient Global Leadership

This gamble paid off in that AGL was apparently able to fill crucial research gaps while still attracting general research submissions related to global leadership. Choosing

volume topics was in keeping with Cassadevall and Fang's (2015) suggestion that fields of study progress by accurately defining the next important problems to tackle. The authors have also tried to advance and promote global leadership research by publishing frequent literature reviews on the overall field of global leadership in AGL. Our rationale for this is to aid scholars who are outside the field to quickly grasp the field's extant knowledge and perceive the research gaps they could fill. Another way that we "market" the global leadership field is via conference presentations. In every presentation, we define the field and distinguish it from traditional leadership, explain its importance, share a slide on the foundational research, and list the major research gaps that we encourage researchers to fill.

Most of the doctoral programs specializing in global leadership seem to be located in the United States and serve practitioners rather than future academics. For a description of some of these programs, see Tolstikov-Mast, Bieri, Walker, Wireman & Vaiman (2018). Nevertheless, all the U.S. programs require dissertations, which is where we have an opportunity to influence their research plans. We have developed relationships with several of these schools, either teaching, guest-lecturing or doing workshops for them. We use this opportunity to describe the progress scholars have made in producing foundational research and point out key research gaps that have yet to be studied. At least three excellent award-winning global leadership dissertations and two outstanding cases have resulted from these efforts and contacts.

Another way we have tried to advance the field is by promoting cross-disciplinary collaborations. Cassadevall & Fang (2015) argued that because fields are somewhat like tribes, new fields should consciously avoid the tribalism that results in conformity and boundaries between groups by encouraging researchers to branch out into other fields to promote cross-fertilization. By focusing on what is good for science rather than what is good solely for a field of study and by encouraging interdisciplinary exchanges, such tribalism can often be avoided.

Looking back, we tried to follow their admonition. For example, one of the authors invited outstanding teachers from different international fields and universities to a teaching forum. Everyone shared their best practices and then gave useful recommendations on a global leadership course and workshop. Similarly, in the 2025 volume of AGL (volume 16), outstanding scholars from 13 different fields of study (work-family relations, intercultural communication, international education, inclusive leadership, team dynamics, careers, anthropology, diversity, language, global mobility, ethics, practitioner/applied management, and international business) were invited by the editors to identify useful theories and linkages between their fields and global leadership, and to offer recommendations for integration and cross-pollination. Hopefully, the resultant connections and novel ideas will advance various fields of study and prevent the field of global leadership from becoming rigid or inward-looking. At present, perhaps the strongest reflection of such integration is between global leadership and the field of responsible leadership, which has birthed a new sub-field: responsible global leadership (Mendenhall, Miska, & Stahl, 2020).

In summary, over the course of the past two and a half decades, we have seen the field of global leadership take hold and establish itself within the umbrella of the field of management. This is evidenced by a variety of factors:

- The increase in the number of global leadership doctoral dissertations and doctoral programs. It should be noted that most of the US-based programs are targeted at practitioners. (Mendenhall, Li, & Osland, 2016; Tolstikov-Mast, et al, 2018).
- The increase in the number and quality of academic and practitioner publications and conference presentations (Vijayakumar et al., 2019 ; Mendenhall, et al, 2023).
- Increased number of publications in a wider range of journals (Mendenhall et al, 2016).
- Increased number of university course offerings on global leadership. (Osland, Li, Petrone & Mendenhall, 2019; Tolstikov-Mast, et al, 2018).
- Publication of textbooks on global leadership (Mendenhall, et al 2018 & 2026;
- Increased university emphasis on developing competencies and experiences in global leadership. (Ly, 2022; Oddou & Mendenhall, 2026; Osland, et al, 2019)
- Incorporation of global leadership competencies into established university programs, such as study abroad programs, global classrooms, and work study programs in other countries. (Oddou & Mendenhall, 2026).
- Growing inclusion of global leadership in handbooks and encyclopedias. (Mendenhall, 2019; Mendenhall & Reiche, 2023).

An extremely successful academic once stated that the road to success for a researcher is to be either a mortician, who successfully disproves an established theory, or a midwife who gives birth to a new theory. While our focus was not limited to theories and our goal was not limited to academic success, we found that helping to birth a new field of study and to think strategically about what was needed to advance the field was extremely professionally rewarding. We hope this overview of our journey in helping to develop a new field of study is useful to those who choose to join the field of global leadership as researchers as well as to those who are committed to developing other new fields of study. For those who desire to conduct research in the field, but are new to it, our best piece of advice is to reach out to scholars who are currently working in the field and seek their guidance and counsel. Our experience has been that global leadership is a field that tends to attract researchers that are not only passionate about the topic, but in general are kind, helpful, and collegial by nature. It is a rewarding field to be a member of.

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About the Authors



Joyce Osland's master's degree in social work led to community development work and supervising the social work program in Peace Corps Colombia. She spent several years working in international development doing baseline studies, employee training, and supervising departmental turn-arounds in African and Latin American countries.

Her interest in organization development led her to Case Western Reserve's Ph.D. program in Organizational Behavior where David Kolb invited her to update his experiential OB textbooks. This greatly influenced her approach to teaching and training. As a professor at INCAE in Costa Rica, she taught and consulted

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Joyce's final academic position was Lucas Endowed Professor of Global Leadership and Executive Director and founder of the Global Leadership Advancement Center at San Jose State University. She was a visiting professor in various doctoral programs and an active consultant. After retiring, she continued to serve as senior editor of *Advances in Global Leadership (Emerald)*, and to co-author the *Global Leadership: Research, Practice and Development* series (Routledge) and other publications.

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