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Leadership capacity in an era of change: the new-normal leader

Introduction

In the short time since we announced the call for papers for this Special Issue, there has been an avalanche of unpredictable geopolitical developments such as Brexit, the start of Donald Trump’s reign and, more recently, dramatic changes in the stability of Algeria, Venezuela and Turkey. These seem to have been prompted by a rise in discontentment amongst populations and to pit the controlled and gradual development paths of democratically elected regimes against the discontinuities arising from decisions by leaders with an authoritarian bent, and referenda reducing complex decisions to binary choices. These are confronting organizations and societies with challenges which are radical, hard to predict and hard to mitigate. It is clear that leaders are now expected to operate in this “new normal” of environments of constant change, both externally and within their organizations. So much so, that the only way which academic research, such as this special issue, can often find tools to discuss such change is to draw comparisons with distant fields such as high trauma and emergency crisis management – as we find as the basis of two of the five papers we are presenting.

Building organisational leadership capacity for change as the norm inevitably leads us to consider Lewin’s (1951) work on organisational change. While Burns (2004) summarized criticism of Lewin as assuming organizations to operate in a stable state, and seeing change as a top-down management-driven process, he re-appraised the work and concluded it still to be valid for the early twenty-first century world. In a later work, he concludes (Burnes and Cooke 2012) that a return to Lewin’s original concept of field theory based on gestalt psychology and conventional topology can provide academics and practitioners with a valuable and much-needed approach to managing change. His definition of organizational change currently fails to tally with the real world as change is often perceived as more intimidating and disturbing than is assumed (Bailey and Raelin, 2015) and can be emotionally petrifying (Marquitz et al., 2016).

In this issue

The research within this special issue indeed takes account of the need for leaders to realize that organizational change can be more intimidating, disrupting and disturbing than is often assumed (Bailey and Raelin, 2015; Jacobs et al., 2013). Two of the papers discussed next explore crisis management contexts to illuminate the stark reality of how extreme the effects of change are, especially on employees. The contexts include crisis leadership within high trauma scenarios across the globe and emergency services personnel in the USA. These extreme contexts are described as “one or more extreme events occurring or likely to occur that may exceed the organization’s capacity to prevent and result in an extensive and intolerable magnitude of physical, psychological, or material consequences to – or in close physical or psycho-social proximity to – organization members” (Hannah et al., 2009, p. 898). Such high reliability-oriented organizations are stated to offer a blueprint on how to respond to crisis. Geier (2016) suggests that this is where most research is needed given that transformational leadership is mainly studied in stable conditions (normal contexts). Shared perspective, vision and trust (Gillespie and Mann, 2004) is especially important given the superior results that transformational leaders achieve compared to those with other leadership styles. Weick and Sutcliffe (2011) suggest that companies can learn how high-reliability organizations respond to crisis and that problems are likely when no shared perspective about a mutual task exists.
In illustration, the first paper by Williams, Woods, Hertele and Kloepfer, “Supervisory Influence: Subordinate Development of Crisis Leader Potential in an Extreme Context,” examines a scenario from which analogies may be drawn of crisis leader potential by studying emergency services personnel and their supervisors working in a large fire rescue organization in the South-eastern USA. Geier (2016) already notes the importance of studying leadership in high-reliability organizations such as fire departments to extend what we know about leadership in extreme contexts. Specifically, Williams et al. emphasize preparedness to share knowledge and to bounce back and learn from crises. One way that emergency services and fire rescue organizations across the country are managing the need to accommodate change is through their human resources, improved active duty training, leadership development and mentorship opportunities. They argue that their findings demonstrate that the more subordinates believe that a leader engages in transformational leadership behavior, the more the leader will report positive leadership potential in their subordinates, creating an encouraging cycle of leadership development for an organization involved in incremental change (Day et al., 2014). Re-evaluated by their supervisors as having stronger potential to become crisis leaders, where such lower levels of subordinate identified with the team strengthened (a) the transformational leadership to a trust association and (b) the indirect effect of perceived transformational leadership on supervisory evaluations of crisis leader potential, through subordinate trust in the leader. They found that crisis leader potential, defined as the capability to assess information and make decisions under tremendous psychological and physical demands (Klann, 2003), is a critical function in such organizations given the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) (Kinsinger and Walch, 2012) events that have become almost routine in organizational life (Lawrence, 2013). They emphasize that the identification with the leader, throughout the team, in building trust might be one way in which subordinates balance respect for hierarchy with adapting to a disaster requiring collaboration – emphasizing responsiveness to the leader’s direction. They suggest that this may enhance the leader’s evaluation of subordinate developmental potential or readiness. This highlights a possible paradox of careful planning married with spontaneous response. Specifically, as mentioned earlier, the authors emphasize resilience in sharing knowledge to bounce back and learn from crises.

As argued above, it becomes clear that what is needed during these situations of extreme change is an emphasis on identification with the leader in building trust where subordinates balance respect for hierarchy with adapting to a disaster requiring collaboration, hereby emphasizing responsiveness to the leader’s direction. A caveat is that change acceptance can be low because leaders tend to underestimate the importance of people’s emotional experiences (Karp and Tveteraas Helgø, 2009) as leaders often operate from implicit mental models that emphasize focus on the organizational aspects and the rational and logical activities of change, without dealing with the emotions unfolding around them on an individual level (Barner, 2008; Graetz and Smith, 2010).

In the second paper in this Special Issue “Leading transitions in traumatically experienced change – a question of doing or being,” DeKlerk explores change leadership in the context of traumatically experienced change. He suggests that “change management is not about managing change but dealing with the people and their experiences.” Moran and Brightman (2000, p. 66) suggest that the emotional work of organizational change must offer a leadership paradigm to facilitate emotional transition. To address this need, DeKlerk discusses the notion of “being-centeredness.” The term takes us back to Richardson’s (1962) seminal work in which the “classical paradigm” or “being-paradigm” was born, anchored in the conviction that Heidegger’s thinking had undergone a momentous “turn” (Kehre) in the 1930s from existence-centeredness to being-centeredness, from Dasein to Sein, from there-being to being itself, experienced as an active force, a process that assumes an initiative of its own by both revealing itself to Dasein, but concealing itself as well...
 Whereas Sartre had declared in 1946, “We are precisely in a situation where there are only human beings,” Heidegger in his “Letter on Humanism” retorted: “We are precisely in a situation where first and foremost there is Being” (Heidegger, 1947). Relating the being-centeredness to leadership development, Fry and Kriger (2009) develop a theory of leadership that utilizes five levels of being as context for effective leadership: the physical world; the world of images and imagination; the level of the soul; the level of the spirit; and the non-dual level. They explore how each of the five levels of being provides a means for advancing both the theory and the practice of leadership and utilize these five levels to create the foundation for a theory of leadership based on being that goes beyond current theory which emphasizes having and doing – either having appropriate traits and competencies or doing appropriate actions depending on the situation. DeKlerk argues the concept has evolved through the change leadership literature as an alternative paradigm which is described as being fully present during the moment in which the change emotions evolve, with compassion and acceptance, connecting and serving authentically to being a catalytic instrument for individuals’ healing and change transitions. The context of organizational change is first explored as a foundation for being-centeredness, through reflections on resistance to change, and the emotional rollercoaster of change, sense making, healing and transitioning, “being-centeredness” with the leader becoming a facilitative instrument that assists restoration of a healthy working environment, healed emotions and change transitioning. Explicitly normalizing and promoting being-centeredness and the further development of this capacity in leaders will allow this latent capacity to surface from its suppressed state, to be applied overtly. Leybourne (2016) calls for urgent research on employees’ emotional transition through change. In these discussions, propositions are offered on leadership aspects required to advance healing and transitioning.

Having focused on traumatic environments in the first two papers, further papers illustrate that leadership research that occurs in more traditional work settings often still fails to capture the unique features of leadership in the more unpredictable, creative industries (Mainemelis et al., 2015). In their paper, “Catalyzing Capacity: Absorptive, Adaptive, and Generative Leadership,” Castillo and Trinh suggest that a relational approach to organizing is fundamental to change; at its heart, organizational viability is rooted in the dynamic interplay between internal and external relationships and their interdependence across time and space. In order to keep pace with such change leaders need a flexibility of mind-set to continually learn, and change. This conceptual paper identifies three fundamental capacities, namely, absorptive, adaptive and generative, through which leaders can cultivate organizations capable of continuous synchronization with their fitness landscapes. Their research stems from the perspective which suggests that more sophisticated conceptual maps (Jacobs and Jaques, 1990) need to emerge to help people make sense of their environment and generate more appropriate responses (Weick, 1979). Because change has become the norm, these maps need to be flexible to take in new information as it becomes available; be able to transcend cause-and effect logic and accommodate thinking about time over longer horizons (Hunt, 2004); and be able to accommodate diverse perspectives of multiple stakeholders. Creativity is another essential component of these conceptual maps because leaders typically must work with novelty that requires generation of new understandings and solutions (McCauley, 2004). Complexity frequently entails emergence, where interactions at the micro level produce a qualitatively different phenomena at the macro level. Similarly, the authors argue that under VUCA conditions, leaders can catalyze the capacity of the organization to self-organize by developing absorptive, adaptive and generative capacities. They describe “Absorptive Capacity” as that which enables a firm to dynamically and continuously innovate. Drivers of absorptive capacity include learning relationships, environmental conditions, and internal and external knowledge. “Adaptive capacity” loosely refers to the ability of leaders to
change to achieve a better fit with the environment in which they operate, including but not limited to modifying existing procedures, adjusting to new circumstances, and updating knowledge and skills to meet new situational demands. The authors suggest that employees not only belong to multiple teams and report to multiple leaders, they also must represent a high degree of diversity in terms of demographic and cultural backgrounds, abilities, working styles and preferences – all of which leaders need to take into account to be effective. A generative approach also fosters interdependence. Whereas technical-rational management seeks to isolate variables and pursue analysis to individual components, process structures provide paths for feedback loops that accommodate recursive influences and reflexive causation, promoting information flow between internal and external boundaries at multiple scales (Todorova and Durisin, 2007). Collectively, absorptive, adaptive and generative capacity reflect key competencies that leaders and organizations need to thrive in VUCA environments. Building on the insights above, there is much that leaders can do to develop these three capacities within their organizations.

As our fourth paper, a practice case study by Malzy and Choain, “Leading change through your creative class,” actively illustrates such a generative approach moving us toward the description of their organization which is massively investing to transform itself from global audit and accounting giants to next-generation digital beacons. While the theoretical base is narrow, results as yet not fully evaluated, hence academically “work in progress,” the process is creating a buzzing organization; we commend the authors on their attempts at a clear interdisciplinary contribution, the focus of the research itself and the potential organisational impact. They use a case study approach to analyze how Richard Florida’s (Florida and Gates, 2001; Florida and Mellander, 2010) theory – talent, technology and tolerance compose the high-value triptych driving – in his case, a city’s growth and attractiveness – can be appropriated by HR to trigger profound changes in corporate governance and culture in an organization. The authors, rather tongue-in-cheek, state that the case study of their firm shows a non-conventional organization in a highly challenged conventional industry which cannot be easily transposed to any other. To stimulate creativity the firm also pursues external resources and competencies to serve their purpose of change. This paper presents the concept of “a creative class” (Florida, 2006) which has joined the ranks of the institutional class including their executive leadership and in a short space of time started to impact the fundamental dynamics of their global organization, establishing an environment higher in talent, technology and tolerance, which the organization failed to achieve through conventional approaches. The creative class has three characteristics and emerges from their most creative people as the following: First, they are “snowball learners,” i.e. they demonstrate a superior appetite and ability to learn fast, and immediately use their new knowledge combined with previously accumulated knowledge stock. Second, they focus on creative implementation over creative design: they prefer to iterate quickly rather than over-engineer the concept. Last, they refer to “resource investigators” (Belbin, 1981), which means that they spend a significant amount of time finding external resources and competencies to serve internal purposes. The creative ideas, conceived unofficially and implemented under the radar, eventually turn into concrete, successful initiatives which – as described in Florida’s urban examples – attract more business, capital and talent. And when that happens, applied in a company, these initiatives and the creatives behind them start to get official recognition – and this in spite of the criticism levied at Florida that elevating creativity to the status of a new urban imperative – defining new sites, validating new strategies, placing new subjects and establishing new stakes in the realm of competitive interurban relations might not work as creativity strategies barely disrupt extant urban-policy orthodoxies, based on interlocal competition, place marketing, property- and market-led development, gentrification and normalized socio-spatial inequality (Peck, 2005). Altogether, more than fifty “talents” have
participated in the “ungroup” with notable results, contributing to the creation of a significant body of knowledge that is powerful and fresh, by generating ideas, without caring about the status they have, whether their ideas are taboo or politically inadvisable, or even whether they are following the right process. The formula is seen to be successful as it is more than bottom-up initiated throughout the organization, leaps to the future, is multigenerational and a strong tool for change as the norm.

In the final paper in this SI, we present “The role of storytelling in navigating through the storm of change,” in which Wilson examines the role of storytelling in organizational change in education involving principals and administrators in three of Central Florida’s counties. Her study found that listening to stories about the impact teachers can have on the academic success of students engages the culture of the organization and helps them not only understand the value of the vision of new educational legislation, but also increases their commitment to the vision and enhances their professional development. She states that these areas were identified as the primary obstacles to organizational change because they have a strong connection to organizational culture that may oppose the desired change (Lewin, 1951). While Lewin (1951) defines organizational change simply as “a desired state of affairs” (p. 224), organizational change can be a process or a means to an end (Quattrone and Hoper, 2001), which, according to Kotter and Schlesinger (2008), is the predominant opinion regarding change. In examining this role of storytelling in organizational change in an educational context, Wilson explores the relevance of some research stemming from Dewey’s (1938) theory of experiential learning that evolved through theorists Lewin (1997), Senge (1990), Nonaka (1991) and Schein (1999). These authors all reveal an organizational application of storytelling which is used to acquire, share, interpret, carry out and store information for the benefit of the organization (Dixon, 1990). Having used a qualitative research methodology, the current author’s perception of the role of storytelling during times of organizational change in the field of education, when the need to obtain collective commitment is essential to the survival of the organization, was that storytelling was so impactful that it became the preferred method of training. Their self-efficacy was enriched by their observations of their colleagues’ successful implementation of the classroom strategies (Fisher et al., 2009) where many others are beginning to feel the strain on their capacity to improve student achievement and are experiencing failing schools (Rentner et al., 2017). Wilson also found that participants believe that while storytelling is only part of the work, it is beneficial and should be used in organizational change to provide understanding, deliver a consistent message, increase commitment, improve professional development and align personal beliefs and organizational culture to the vision of the organization. Finally, even though the participants support the use of storytelling because of its perceived benefits, they believe it is only part of the change process and could be used as a crisis management tool. This however will not be realized until leadership understands that such creative approaches can enhance the humanization of leaders who set about developing their alertness, awareness and appreciation of themselves and their contexts (Fleming et al., 2018), reducing the need for them to have all the answers and problems solved with a traditional evidence-based approach.

Discussion and recommendations
We know that organizations need an integrated approach to drive systematic, constructive change while reducing the obstacles to change (Al-Haddad and Kotnour, 2015). The failure rate of change initiatives, approximately 70 percent (Balogun and Hope Hailey, 2004; Beer and Nohria, 2000), has little improved little (Jacobs et al., 2013; Jansson, 2013). The quest for capturing the most desirable method to changing organizations is ubiquitous (Bamford and Forrester, 2003), with some suggesting that the appropriate approach to change is highly dependent on the organizational context (Nyström et al., 2013; Michel et al., 2013) and renders
the one-size-fits all method being utterly redundant (Kotter and Schlesinger, 2008). Many studies offer lists of leadership competencies, styles and activities (Battilana et al., 2010; Magsaysay and Hechanova, 2017) are perplexing for contemporary leaders of change, with much chin stroking as to which single best change leadership style or a single set of competencies is best. Ford and Ford (2012, p. 22; after Woodward and Hendry, 2004) confirm this “available research indicates there is no definitive formula to the leadership of change.” Empirical evidence has identified that embracing multiple styles of cognition is a hallmark of exceptional leaders (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Schaubroeck et al., 2011). These various forms of cognitive capacities include the ability to foster meaning making and trust through shared communication; the ability to focus attention; the ability to create empowering opportunities; willingness to take risks; optimism rather than fearfulness; and self-awareness (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Schaubroeck et al., 2011).

In an ideal world, we know that transformational leaders achieve superior results in developing followers because they are role models, display integrity, inspire others, intellectually stimulate subordinates, provide consideration and are trusted (Bass and Riggio, 2006), but most of this heroism is related to the fact that transformational leadership is mainly studied in stable conditions (normal contexts) (Geier, 2016). Comparisons to high trauma and emergency crisis management are inevitable and we have learned that leaders who operate successfully in such change environments need the resilience, trust and teamwork support often not apparent in non-change environments.

This paper aimed to provide a state of the art positioning on the topic of “Leadership Capacity in an Era of Change: the New Normal Leader,” and in doing so, we are taking change not only as inevitable but constructively so, considering leadership capacity in a new light. We introduced and assessed a number of new papers, in which we have displayed similarities and differences, and anchored them in related literature. This now allows us to present a brief summary, our “state of the art” position on requirements of the new-normal change leaders:

- a focus on people, human resources, mentoring, learning, healing emotions;
- a leader who is a facilitator, never top down, conscious of leadership development;
- a healthy working environment, respect, exchange of ideas, a creative class;
- trust through sharing, teams, embracing equality, diversity, slack, tolerance;
- vision, and commitment to the vision, through talent, technology, storytelling; and
- a dynamic interplay between all stakeholders, employees, customers, investors, shareholders.

The world has continued to see VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity) in many forms. And in a recent paper, Millar et al. (2018, p. 13) offered a number of recommendations to leaders to enable them to show resilience and again innovate in this VUCA world. A number of these would assist new-normal leaders in building capacity for change as the norm for instance: thoughtful reflection on renewal from within an organization through transformational skills in each employee, not just by scouting the latest technologies; a big part of leadership for the VUCA world is the ability to provide ecosystem and network entrepreneurship, and organizations and managers need to integrate functions and processes within the company to create dynamic capabilities with faster cycles and continuous innovation processes; a number overlap with what has come out of the papers and analyses in this Special Issue.

To summarize our recommendations, the first quality for a new-normal organizational change leader, when change is the norm, is flexibility and resilience: an ability to recharge through organisational and resource fluidity, as if one is working in a start-up instead of a
mature company; second, through shared perspectives, building on shared experiences, build
trust and shared vision with all stakeholders; and, third, creating new skills and tools to
respond to required new systems thinking in the organization. Being marketing-savvy, not
just answering existing and well-known customer needs but anticipating for both current and
future customers their requirements of the future; inspiring others to see change as the norm,
ot as something unique and one off, something that will happen all the time and in different
guises. Inspiring managers, customers, shareholders and other stakeholders to think the same
way, and cooperating with them, and with competitors in co-opetition mode.

Transformational leadership also where change is the norm shares and responds,
opening up, closing in, moving all the time, focussed throughout. Stakeholders follow,
responding and challenging, turning the organization from static to dynamic. One then feels
stronger, trust develops, lines become shorter, and planning and responding to challenges
becoming an everyday task rather than a yearly exercise. In other words, a big part of
leadership for change as the norm is the ability to provide ecosystem and stakeholder
network entrepreneurship, leading from the front as we orchestrate new forms of
organization and institution, new markets, new domains and arenas to shape the future,
rather than just react to it. To that end, leaders, organizations and managers need to
integrate functions and processes within the company to create dynamic capabilities with
faster cycles for everyone concerned.

One step further would be for the new-normal leaders to consider and decide to what
extent change as the norm means that leaders and organizations they lead should all be
normative, e.g. should have people and planet, not just fast-speed greed-led shares and
profit as their objective.

Rather than plugging holes and sticking to downward spiral non-solutions, our analyses
and recommendations tried to offer new-normal leaders space and direction to be true
leaders again, embracing change as the norm as an incentive and invigorating their
companies for a sustainable future.

Last in this paper, but never the least, we would like to express our heartfelt gratitude to
our near 50 reviewers for their critical analyses and judgements and the support they have
given to authors. Both they and authors who submitted papers are due recognition for their
effort, their patience and their resilience. We hope that they will make similar contributions
in the future, as our changing world calls for ever more insight and understanding.

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**Further reading**


Supervisory influence
Subordinate development of crisis leader potential in an extreme context

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Abstract
Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to examine the development of leader potential in an extreme context – it develops and tests a model that describes how subordinate perceptions of individual-focused transformational leadership, subordinate trust in the leader and subordinate identification with the team influence supervisory evaluations of subordinate crisis leader potential.

Design/methodology/approach – Surveys were administered to emergency services personnel and their supervisors working in a large fire rescue organization in the Southeastern USA. Survey responses were analyzed using hierarchical regression.

Findings – Results support the theoretical model – subordinates reporting high levels of trust in their transformational leader were evaluated by their supervisors as having stronger potential to become crisis leaders. Lower levels of subordinate identification with the team strengthened the transformational leadership to trust association and the indirect effect of perceived transformational leadership on supervisory evaluations of subordinate crisis leader potential (through subordinate trust in the leader).

Practical implications – Supervisors who are viewed as transformational and fostering trusting relationships by subordinates are more likely to evaluate subordinates as having the potential to lead in crisis situations. In an extreme context within an organization facing change, subordinates who identify less with their team might build a more trusting relationship with a leader who is perceived as demonstrating transformational behaviors.

Social implications – Subordinate focus on the leader appears to enhance supervisory evaluations of subordinate potential (for leader development) in the study. Individual-level rewards for employees that involve competition might counter efforts toward shared mental models and remain the greatest challenge in the public emergency services setting.

Originality/value – Evaluating leader development, in terms of crisis leader potential, in an extreme context using a process model – to understand the interplay of individual-focused transformational leadership and trust given the moderating effect of team identification – is a key strength of the current study.

Keywords Transformational leadership, Team identification, Leader development, Extreme context, Crisis leader potential

Paper type Research paper

Subordinate development and the evaluation of crisis leader potential (defined as the capability to assess information and make decisions under tremendous psychological and physical demands: Klann, 2003) is a critical function in organizations given the volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous events that have become almost routine in organizational life (Lawrence, 2013). This research addresses one context of leadership, “extreme contexts,” which are defined as environments in which there are “[...] one or more extreme events occurring or
likely to occur that may exceed the organization’s capacity to prevent and result in an extensive and intolerable magnitude of physical, psychological, or material consequences to – or in close physical or psycho-social proximity to – organization members” (Hannah et al., 2009, p. 898). Through their proficiency and acquired knowledge, today’s experienced leaders must play a central role in identifying the potential of future leaders to lead in crisis situations and providing opportunities for future leaders to develop the capabilities needed to respond to this type of changing organizational workplace environment. “Crisis context” is a more general term, with crisis episodes reflecting situations that threaten high priority goals with little or no response time available (Pearson and Clair, 1998); crisis and extreme contexts are entrained, with one often resulting from the other (Hannah et al., 2009).

In examining leadership in extreme contexts, Hannah et al. (2009) noted that fire services operations fit within the category of high-reliability organizations that consider “safety first” and face extreme events. Understanding how followers develop into leaders (which we will refer to as “leader development” in this research) and which implicit theories of leader prototypes fit an extreme context have implications for effective leadership (Hannah et al., 2009; Lord et al., 1984). In developing leaders, the leader development literature refers to “leader development” as having a focus on individuals to assess and build leaders in areas that improve their potential and development (Avolio and Hannah, 2008). Because leader development is a dynamic process that involves multiple people (Day, 2000) and stresses high-quality relationships built on the basis of mutual trust and respect (Day et al., 2014), recent scholarship recognizes the important role that relationships play in leader development (Geier, 2016). Bennis (2007) argued that, “[…] leadership is grounded in a relationship” (p. 3); thus, it is important to understand relational leadership effects on the development of future leaders (Dulebohn et al., 2012).

Transformational leaders, for example, achieve superior results in developing followers because they are role models, display integrity, inspire others, intellectually stimulate subordinates, provide consideration and are trusted (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Bass (1999) and Bass and Avolio (1990) noted that transformational leadership influences several outcomes including follower job satisfaction, trust and performance. In high-reliability organizations, Geier (2016) noted that transformational leadership influences follower performance. Interestingly, Bass and Riggio (2006) highlighted countering accounts in the literature about the relative effectiveness of leadership styles in extreme contexts (in some cases where close relationships are needed transformational leadership is more effective, however, when safety is paramount transactional leadership might be needed). Similarly, Bass et al. (2003) noted that in an extreme context (military) both transformational and transactional leadership predict unit performance. However, increased trust (“a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions of another”: Rousseau et al., 1998, p. 395) built in the leader promotes more effective leadership behavior during extreme situations (Hannah et al., 2009).

After observing emergency fire response teams in action, we conducted a review of the literature on emergency response settings and leader development, revealing that the majority of quantitative leadership studies that address extreme contexts were conducted in military and combat situations and focused on transformational leadership (Geier, 2016). We limit our research to a fire services organization setting in the USA in order to explore processes considered important to change management in the environment of high risk and danger faced by professional firefighters (Geier, 2016). Our review of the literature on leadership in extreme contexts leads us to propose the following research question:

**RQ1.** How do subordinate perceptions of transformational leadership behaviors, subordinate trust in their leader and subordinate identification with the work team influence supervisory evaluations of subordinate crisis leader potential, or capability to lead in an extreme context?
Firefighting is an area that has especially high exposure to extreme contexts making effective leadership imperative (Geier, 2016). Waugh and Streib (2006) reviewed the evolution of emergency management and suggested that continuous change within these and emergency services types of organizations have been occurring following the events of September 11, 2001 and Hurricane Katrina, and greater complexity has resulted from increased involvement of law enforcement, national security and also terror threats. Teamwork is essential in high-reliability fire-rescue organizations with team identification referring to the personal commitment an individual has with a team (Liu and Li, 2018). Collaboration is unavoidable, and the paradoxical challenge involves maintaining strict organization and planning while being spontaneous in adapting and improvising plans as circumstances faced change. There is a leadership talent crisis facing organizations (Ashford and DeRue, 2012) and this paradox confronts leaders at all levels in each emergency services organization and challenges personnel to respond to the needs of the direct supervisor and the team simultaneously (Drabek, 1987).

Jurie (2000) suggested that a “competent organization” requires trust and mutual accommodation, providing opportunities for the development of individual potential. In the creation of competent organizations, Jurie (2000) highlighted the importance of capacity in the construction of organizational competence and note the role of individuals in a transformative process to bring about improvement. Jurie gives an example of a Fire Rescue Division facing change (in terms of a layoff and reorganization) and the need to address hierarchy and politics as central to understanding rational administrative processes (that occur as organizations develop leaders).

Leader capability and effectiveness is critical in organizations faced with uncertain, hazardous, and potentially volatile events (Bish et al., 2015). Research on crisis leader efficacy is one area of inquiry that focuses on leader effectiveness in such situations. Crisis leader efficacy identifies a leader’s self-efficacy to lead in a crisis (Hadley et al., 2011). Given that emergency services organizations face constant change and uncertainty, organizational leaders need to focus on developing crisis leader potential in subordinates to promote future effective crisis leaders.

In building a model for leader development in an extreme context, there are four key contributions of this study. First, we chose the fire rescue setting to represent one aspect of emergency services in which competence is a necessity, with the need for improved disaster management following events such as 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, and recurring wildfires (Hannah et al., 2009), as well as events such as the Kilauea volcano eruptions in Hawaii. As noted by Hannah et al. (2009) leadership in extreme contexts is one of the least researched areas in the leadership field. Hannah and Parry (2013) called for specific research to examine leadership styles in extreme contexts. In this setting, there might be distorted information processing and decision making, and while this context is uniquely uncommon in some organizations, it is commonplace in others such as those in the military, medical, law enforcement, fire and crisis response fields. This might be an area in which leadership research is needed most (Geier, 2016) given that transformational leadership is mainly studied in stable conditions (normal contexts). Geier (2016) noted the importance of studying leadership in high-reliability organizations such as fire departments to extend what we know about leadership in extreme contexts. This is especially important given the superior results that transformational leaders achieve compared to other leadership styles.

Second, this research responds to the call by Epitropaki et al. (2017) to distinguish between individual-focused and group-focused transformational behaviors because the former results in personal identification with the leader and the latter with collective identification among followers. We employ a measure of transformational leadership allowing us to discuss results specific to individual-focused transformational leadership in studying its effects on the development of future leaders.
Third, we examine the influence of situational effects on the validity of theories surrounding transformational leadership (Antonakis et al., 2003). The model presented here examines situational influences (team identity) on trust to consider other “[...] aspects of the context or situation in which [a] trust relationship between leaders and followers develop” (Lapidot et al., 2007, p. 29). Understanding the interplay of downward influence that leaders have (transformational leadership) and lateral influence of peers through team identification is important to extend leadership research. This research, therefore, answers the call by Geier (2016) for more in-depth research on moderators and mediators — we not only examine a unique moderator (team identification) in this study of a high-reliability organization but also examine the interplay between the moderator and mediator (trust) in understanding the influence of individual-focused transformational leadership on leader development (crisis leader potential).

Fourth, this research explains how perceived transformational leadership behaviors contribute to a novel outcome in the leadership literature, evaluations of subordinate crisis leader potential (leader development), through a subordinate’s trust in the leader. The leadership literature has accumulated a large body of evidence in support of transformational leadership (Antonakis and House, 2013; Epitropaki et al., 2017), but little about its influence on follower development. Inceoglu et al. (2018) noted the importance of understanding the process through which leadership style influences follower development.

A developmental model of crisis leader potential in an extreme context
The incident command system or ICS is the official designation for the approach adopted by the National Fire Academy as its standard for incident response (Bigley and Roberts, 2001). It is used to integrate with Federal Emergency Management Agency to maintain a credible nationwide emergency management capability. This approach is used by firefighters and police, for example, to assemble and control the temporary systems deployed to manage personnel and equipment at emergencies. While highly bureaucratic in terms of hierarchy, it also provides for the organizational flexibility required for reliable performance in highly variable/risky situations (Bigley and Roberts, 2001). This environment provides a novel arena to understand how supervisory evaluations of leadership potential in emergency personnel are affected when there is supervision by transformational leaders (as perceived by subordinates), given subordinate identification with their team and supervisor—subordinate trust levels.

Weick and Sutcliffe (2011) noted that companies can learn from the way that high-reliability organizations respond to crisis and that problems are likely when no shared perspective exists about a mutual task. Specifically, the authors emphasize resilience in sharing knowledge to bounce back and learn from crises. One way that emergency services and fire rescue organizations across the country are managing the need for change is through their human resources, improved active duty training, leadership development and mentorship opportunities. The emergency services organization surveyed in the current study was slowly growing following the lifting of a hiring freeze and addressing continuous improvement in staffing, hiring and training, and invited us to help them assess the way in which leadership was perceived in the organization as well as exploring extant views on leader development. Carter et al. (2014) noted that transformational leadership is important in creating positive outcomes in incremental organizational change. Balancing the need for flexibility with hierarchy remains a challenge in many rules-based organizations such as fire rescue services, in which safety is a priority.

The emphasis in this research transitions beyond the study of self-perceptions of crisis leader efficacy to address the development of crisis leader potential in advance of a crisis. Crisis leader potential takes us beyond general leader potential in that it involves a recognition of the ability to operate with constrained rationality during a crisis (Parry, 1990),
which requires leaders to make critical decisions in ambiguous and time-sensitive situations (Hadley et al., 2011). Despite the importance of capable leaders in volatile and uncertain situations, there is minimal research on the assessment of leader capability in crisis management settings (Hadley et al., 2011).

This research on crisis leader potential attempts to fill the gap in understanding leader capability in an extreme context and relies on the theoretical framework of implicit leadership theory (ILT), specifically leadership categorization theory. The application of ILT describes how leaders hold unconscious representations shaped by past interactions and personal experiences (Lord, 1985) that help them make evaluations of effective crisis leadership. Per leadership categorization theory, individuals have knowledge schemas of what a prototypical leader should be (Lord, 1985; Lord et al., 1982) and leaders can use ILTs as a basis for interpretation of follower behavior (Lord and Maher, 1991). Furthermore, follower ILTs have been found to be associated with perceptions of transformational leadership behaviors (Rahn et al., 2016).

Transformational leaders are often described as coaches, and the conceptualization of individual-focused transformational leadership by Wang and Howell (2010) includes follower development as a key component. Coaching has been described as an important vehicle to deliver personal and performance outcomes (Stewart et al., 2008). Effective leadership is needed in extreme contexts and access to feedback, as provided by a transformational leader, is important for developmental challenge (DeRue and Wellman, 2009). Transformational leaders have been described as change leaders because they have a vision (Bass, 1985) and, like change leaders, they motivate employees to take responsibility (Gioia et al., 2013). Kanter (2000) noted that change leaders need skills for tuning in to the environment, challenging the prevailing organizational wisdom, communicating a compelling aspiration, building coalitions, transferring ownership to a working team, learning to persevere and making everyone a hero – all of which describe the attributes of transformational leaders (Bass, 1985). After reviewing Al-Haddad and Kotnour (2015), we ascertained that the change occurring in the organization that was the focus of our study might be described as involving evaluation, re-evaluation and action (Chen, Yu and Chang, 2006). In the fire rescue context, improving efficiency (handling a large number of calls in a timely fashion) and effectiveness (ensuring constituent safety) require constant evaluation and action. Understanding and monitoring leadership actions as well as reactions of followers and leaders to follower development is a necessary step in the adjustment process (Luecke, 2003). The evaluation of crisis leader potential in the organization studied here was a preliminary step toward the implementation of a peer mentoring program in the organization, as organizational leadership sought to assess leader development and increase shared leadership and leadership potential in all personnel.

The leader development model presented here identifies factors that influence supervisory evaluations of a subordinate’s potential to lead during a crisis. The model presented considers the relationship between perceived transformational leadership, subordinate trust in the leader and supervisor perceptions of subordinate crisis leader potential; and how subordinate cognitive identification with the team moderates these effects (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.**
Developmental model of crisis leader potential
Cognitive team identification and the development of trust in the transformational leader

The relationship between transformational leader behaviors and subordinate trust in the leader have been well established in the literature (e.g. Jung and Avolio, 2000; Podsakoff et al., 1990; Shamir et al., 1993). As suggested by Wang and Howell (2010), individual-focused transformational leadership is defined as “[...] behavior aiming to empower individual followers to develop their full potential, enhance their abilities and skills, and improve their self-efficacy and self-esteem” (p. 1135). The trust that develops between a subordinate and their leader is influenced by the leader’s expectations for the subordinate’s high performance (Wang and Howell, 2010). This high performance is expectation is emphasized in extreme contexts with life and death challenges (Geier, 2016). While several conceptualizations of trust exist (e.g. Cook and Wall, 1980), we define trust as “[...] faith in and loyalty to the leader,” as presented by Podsakoff et al. (1990, p. 113). Because perceptions of transformational leadership have a positive association with trust (Robinson, 1996; Pillai and Williams, 2004), if the follower believes that the leader is enhancing their skills and is invested in follower development, the follower may be more likely to trust the leader; this is especially important for change initiatives.

This belief provides the subordinate with the opportunity to identify strongly with their transformational leader. However, in work teams, there is also a pull to develop a strong team identity. High levels of individual identification with their work team have been shown to contribute to greater cooperation among team members. However, sometimes organizational policies (such as reward systems) can reduce cooperation by providing rewards based on individual vs team performance (Riccucci and Saldivar, 2014). Because of these disparate outcomes, this research compares competing arguments for the moderating influence of team identification on the transformational leadership to trust relationship given the unique setting of emergency services.

The first argument focuses on the positive effects of subordinate identification with their team. Team identification is important in facilitating cooperation in teams (van der Vegt and Bunderson, 2005), leading to, for example, enhanced team performance and job satisfaction (Bezrukova et al., 2009; Cicero et al., 2007). Henry et al. (1999) discussed cognitive identification with a group as “[...] awareness of a group and self-categorization of oneself as a member” (p. 560). Thus, strong identification with the team serves as “social glue” (van Vugt and Hart, 2004, p. 585) that enables team members’ willingness to achieve common objectives (van Knippenberg and Ellemers, 2003). Ramthun and Matkin (2014) noted that, in extreme situations, individual sacrifices might be made to enhance team capabilities. When followers develop and perceive strong team identity, they are more likely to experience solidarity, loyalty and trust and thus, have a stronger orientation toward building emotional bonds with others, including the leader (Somech et al., 2009). Therefore, this first argument leads to the hypothesis that strong identification with the team will strengthen the relationship between transformational leadership and trust in the leader:

H1a. The relationship between transformational leadership and trust in the leader will be moderated by follower identification with the team, such that the higher the level of identification, the stronger the positive relationship.

The second argument recognizes that institutions can create ambiguity by the way that rewards are distributed (Foss et al., 2015). Team-based vs individual-based rewards create competition for a leader’s attention. For example, while emergency responders work in a team setting, promoting personnel mainly based on test performance might create competition among members (Riccucci and Saldivar, 2014). Banks et al. (2014) highlighted the benefit of a strong relationship with one’s leader without the need for a positive relationship with one’s teammates, suggesting that followers might recognize the tradeoffs for supervisor recognition between focusing on the leader vs the team. Cognitive identification with the team involves
being satisfied as a team member (Henry et al., 1999) but does not necessarily support bonding with the leader to be recognized by the leader in such settings (Banks et al., 2014). However, a “push” away from the team vs “pull” toward the leader suggests that a context in which there is a low level of team identification might promote a deeper faith in the leader toward the attainment of individual goals (Rosendaal and Bijlsma-Frankema, 2015). Hannah et al. (2009) noted that during extreme events followers will look to leaders to centralize authority and take action. Therefore, the second competing argument leads us to hypothesize that low identification with the team will strengthen the relationship between transformational leadership and trust in the leader:

H1b. The relationship between transformational leadership and trust in the leader will be moderated by follower identification with the team, such that the lower the level of identification, the stronger the positive relationship.

The role of relationships with leader and teammates on leader development
Leader development is a vigorous process that stresses high-quality and mutually trusting relationships (Day et al., 2014). Trust becomes salient for individuals when they feel vulnerable, interdependent or at risk (Rousseau et al., 1998) – all common emotional states in uncertain and volatile crises (Mumford et al., 2007). Followers’ trust in a leader creates a high-functioning and psychologically safe environment (Baer and Frese, 2003) and contributes to a higher quality relationship. Trust motivates a follower to develop beyond formalized work roles and prescribed jobs (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). The experience of trust can increase the followers’ ability to demonstrate a desire for career advancement that can promote the leader’s perception of the subordinate’s leadership potential. Sweeney (2010) reported that trust in the leader is critical to effectively operate in extreme events. Therefore, subordinate trust in the leader is positively associated with supervisory evaluations of subordinate leadership potential during a crisis:

H2. Follower trust in the leader will be positively associated with supervisory evaluations of subordinate crisis leader potential.

Dansereau et al. (1975) suggested role prescriptions, or formal conditions of an organizational position, are part of the leader–follower development process. Leadership categorization theory may explain the influence of perceptions of both the perceiver and the perceived in leadership development. The similarity between positive leader and follower perceptions of each other’s roles suggests that as a follower’s perception of transformational leadership in the superior increases, so too might the leader’s perception of the follower’s leadership potential (Dansereau et al., 1975). For example, transformational leaders’ developmental activities, such as awarding opportunities for development, involving followers in the decision-making process and giving positive and constructive feedback (Sommer and Kulkarni, 2012), may increase subordinate awareness of effective crisis leadership (Shondrick and Lord, 2010; Weick, 1995) and subsequent subordinate displays of similar leadership qualities. Sensemaking during a crisis is characteristically complex – individuals have to solve problems in a novel, ambiguous situation involving time pressure and stress while interacting with others (Mumford et al., 2007). Followers use ILTs to respond to triggers (i.e. questions like “what should I be doing to be effective in this situation?”), and reflect on experience (Lord et al., 1982) to enact leadership behaviors modeled on a superior. Supervisors are likely to notice how followers respond to their influence and can then evaluate emerging leadership.

The relationship between subordinate perceived transformational leadership and supervisory evaluations of subordinate leadership potential is likely mediated by follower trust in the leader. Podsakoff et al. (1990) posited that trust plays an important mediating role in the transformational leadership process. Trust built through transformational
leadership creates an environment of openness to values, feelings and actions by allowing admission of mistakes and confronting behavior when no one else will (Goleman et al., 2002; Goodwin et al., 2011). Yukl (1989) suggested that trust which results from transformational leadership generates heightened levels of performance and commitment. It is therefore hypothesized that trust in the supervisor mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and subordinate crisis leader potential:

H3. There will be an indirect effect of transformational leadership on supervisory evaluations of subordinate crisis leader potential, through trust in the leader.

In a context where individuals work together as a team, a high level of identification with the team contributes to a sense of interdependence (Somech et al., 2009). Interdependence creates an environment in which the follower supports the team. Conversely, if this type of identification is lacking, behaviors are likely to be less interdependent, and individuals might focus more on responding to transformational leadership behaviors. Employees demonstrate behaviors consistent with supervision when they trust the leader in response to transformational leadership behaviors (Podsakoff et al., 1990; Goodwin et al., 2011). Because team-based vs individual-based rewards create competition for a leader’s attention, team identification is likely to affect the way in which transformational leadership influences supervisory evaluations of subordinate crisis leader potential, through trust in the leader. The indirect effect is expected to be conditional on the level of follower identification with the team:

H4. The indirect effect of transformational leadership on supervisory evaluations of subordinate crisis leader potential through subordinate’s trust in the leader is conditional on the level of follower identification with the team.

Method
Sample
As a proxy for organizational teams working in contexts of constant change and uncertainty, and to tap an example of an extreme context, surveys were delivered to emergency services personnel and their supervisors working in a large fire rescue organization in the Southeastern USA. Front-line personnel received a survey asking about their leader (perceived transformational behaviors) and themselves (trust in the leader and team identification). Supervisors were asked to evaluate the leader development of front-line personnel in terms of subordinate crisis leader potential. The two sets of surveys were matched using a leader match code provided by the supervisor to the team; this ensured that responses were anonymous, and no respondent names were revealed. Front-line personnel (firefighters; \( n = 412 \)) and leaders (unit/station shift captains; \( n = 99 \)) completed the surveys. The mean subordinate age was about 40 years old, with an average of 12.25 years of tenure. Leader mean age was 46, with an average of 20 years of tenure. In the sample, 338 identified as male, 22 as female and 52 did not specify. After accounting for missing data, the final sample included 308 respondents with matching supervisory evaluations. Leaders were predominately male, only five leaders identified as female, with two not specifying. Respondents self-identified as 62.4 percent Caucasian, 4.6 percent African–American, 14.8 percent Hispanic, 1.2 percent Asian and 17.0 percent “Other” or not given. The educational background was predominately professional (e.g. emergency management, fire science, law, health, public administration).

Measures
Transformational leadership. The survey included individual-focused dimensions from the dual-level transformational leadership measure developed by Wang and Howell (2010). The measure included four dimensions of transformational leadership directed at the
individual: communicating high expectations, follower development, intellectual stimulation and personal recognition (Wang and Howell, 2010). Subordinates rated how frequently their supervisor displayed the behavior described; using a five-point Likert-type scale, with 1 as “never” displays and 5 as “always” displays the behavior. Statements included “my supervisor demonstrates total confidence in me” and “my supervisor provides coaching to help me improve my job performance.” Recent research using this scale demonstrated strong reliability and validity for the individual-focused items, for example, Li et al. (2016) reported a coefficient $\alpha$ of reliability of 0.93 in their research. We report a reliability of 0.91 for the individual-focused items.

**Trust in the leader.** Trust was measured using six items presented in the study of Podsakoff et al. (1990) and validated as a unidimensional measure. Respondents indicated the degree to which they agree with statements about their current leader using a seven-point Likert-type scale, with 1 equating to “strongly disagree” and 7 equating to “strongly agree.” Statement examples include “I have complete faith in the integrity of my manager/supervisor” and “I would support my leader in almost any emergency.” Research by Goodwin et al. (2011) as well as Sendjaya and Pekerti (2010) employed Podsakoff et al.’s (1990) trust in the leader measure, noting that although there are other measures of trust, this measure focuses specifically on trust between followers and their leaders making it ideal for capturing follower trust as faith in and loyalty to the leader. Sendjaya and Pekerti (2010) reported a coefficient $\alpha$ of reliability of 0.81. We report a reliability of 0.79 in the current study.

**Team identification.** The four-item cognitive group identification scale developed by Henry et al. (1999) was employed to represent subordinate team identification. The cognitive dimension supports the self-categorization of the team member as a member of their group. Subordinates were asked to rate their identification using a seven-point Likert-type scale, with 1 equating to “strongly disagree” and 7 equating to “strongly agree.” Statement examples include “I see myself as quite similar to other members of the group” and, “I think of this group as part of who I am.” Research by Solansky (2011) employed Henry et al.’s (1999) measure in a study of working teams examining the relationship between team identification and team performance and reported a Cronbach’s $\alpha$ of reliability of 0.89. We report a reliability of 0.85.

**Crisis leader potential.** Crisis leader potential was evaluated by adapting the nine-item measure of crisis leader efficacy developed by Hadley et al. (2011). The original measure focused on self-reports of crisis leader efficacy; in this study, supervisors reported on the crisis leader potential of their subordinates. Leaders were asked to rate their subordinates using a seven-point Likert-type scale, with 1 equating to “strongly disagree” and 7 equating to “strongly agree.” Statement examples include “this person can make decisions and recommendations even when s/he doesn’t have as much information as s/he would like” and “this person can modify his/her regular activities instantly to respond to an urgent need.” A study of nurse practitioners, facing emergency situations similar to emergency responders in terms of the critical nature of their job, employed Hadley et al.’s (2011) measure and reported a reliability of 0.92 (Samuel et al., 2015). We report a reliability of 0.97.

**Background variables**

The background characteristics of subordinate age, gender, tenure with the organization and subordinate social desirability in responding (SDRS) were included as covariates in analyses. Gender was coded as “1” for males and “0” for females. SDRS was measured using a five-item scale employed in previous research (Hays et al., 1989; Williams et al., 2018). A sample item is, “There have been occasions when I took advantage of someone.” A five-point scale ranging from 1 “definitely true” to 5 “definitely false” was employed. Controlling for SDRS is discussed in clinical psychology research as a method for addressing bias (e.g. Reynolds, 1982).
Results

Preliminary data analysis

Table I provides the means, standard deviations, correlations and reliability estimates of the variables of interest. The main study variables were all positively correlated, and all reliabilities were above 0.70. SDRS correlated with transformational leadership, trust in the leader and team identification and was therefore included as a control variable in all our analyses to interpret results after accounting for any variance explained by SDRS (Dalton and Ortegren, 2011).

Independence of constructs

Confirmatory factor analyses were conducted to evaluate the distinctiveness of the independent variables. First, an unconstrained three-factor theoretically defined CFA of the three independent constructs was evaluated: a second-order factor of four dimensions of individual-focused transformational leadership, a single-order factor of trust in the leader and a single-order factor of cognitive identification with the team. This model was compared to two alternative models to confirm the uniqueness of the independent variables. The second model consisted of two factors: an incomplete second-order factor[1] model containing the four individual-focused transformational leadership dimensions and the six items for trust in the leader loading onto the same factor and a single-order factor for cognitive identification. The third model consisted of one incomplete second-order factor consisting of the four individual-focused transformational leadership dimensions, the six items for trust in the leader and the four items for cognitive identification, loading onto the same factor.

The theoretical model demonstrated the best fit. The results for the theoretical model (three-factor model) were a $\chi^2$ of 1,285.15 with 343 degrees of freedom, CFI = 0.908, TLI = 0.898 and RMSEA = 0.086. The results for the second model (two-factor model) were a $\chi^2$ of 2,275.53 with 345 degrees of freedom, CFI = 0.811, TLI = 0.793 and RMSEA = 0.123. The results for the third model (one-factor model) were a $\chi^2$ of 2,526.62 with 346 degrees of freedom, CFI = 0.787, TLI = 0.767 and RMSEA = 0.131 (Hu and Bentler, 1999).

Tests of hypotheses

$H1a$ and $H1b$–$H3$ were analyzed using hierarchical regression analysis. For $H3$ and $H4$, the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2015) in SPSS version 24 was employed to determine the significance of the results. $H1a$ and $H1b$ stated that team identity (cognitive) will have a moderating effect on the relationship between transformational leadership and trust in the leader (Table II, Figure 2). As noted in Table II, transformational leadership was positively associated with trust in the leader. There was a negative interaction between transformational leadership and team identification in association with trust in the leader. The results support moderation with a more positive relationship between transformational leadership and trust when team identification was low vs when team identification was high. Simple slopes analyses reveal that

<table>
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<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
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<td>1. Age</td>
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<td>8.35</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Gender</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>−0.02</td>
<td>−</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tenure</td>
<td>12.25</td>
<td>7.47</td>
<td>0.77**</td>
<td>−0.01</td>
<td>−</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Social desirability</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>−0.04</td>
<td>−0.05</td>
<td>−0.06</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Transformational leadership</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>−0.12*</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>−0.15**</td>
<td>0.15**</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>6. Trust in leader</td>
<td>5.94</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>−0.01</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.16**</td>
<td>0.50**</td>
<td>0.79</td>
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<td>7. Team identification</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>−0.06</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>−0.09</td>
<td>0.11*</td>
<td>0.31**</td>
<td>0.30**</td>
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<td>8. Crisis leadership potential</td>
<td>5.71</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>−0.05</td>
<td>0.19**</td>
<td>0.28**</td>
<td>0.12*</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: $n = 308$. Reliabilities appear along the diagonal. Gender: male = 1. *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$
the slopes were significantly different from 0: with high team identification the simple slope at +1 SD was $\gamma = 0.27, p < 0.10$; with low team identification the simple slope at −1 SD was $\gamma = 0.56, p < 0.05$.

H2 asserted that trust in the leader is positively related to supervisory evaluations of crisis leader potential. The results of the test of regression supported the second hypothesis with trust reporting a positive relationship with crisis leader potential ($B = 0.26; p < 0.01$; Table III Equation 1) as did transformational leadership ($B = 0.22; p < 0.01$; Table III Equation 2).

H3 predicted that there would be an indirect relationship between transformational leadership and supervisory evaluations of crisis leader potential, through trust in the leader. The significance of this indirect effect was tested using bootstrapping procedures and employed the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2015) in SPSS version 24. These procedures examine the level of significance of the indirect effect. The program computed unstandardized

<table>
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<th>Variables</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social desirability</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall $R^2 (F)$</td>
<td>0.03 (2.89*)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Variables added at Step 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Transformational leadership</td>
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<td>0.06</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overall $R^2 (F$ change)</td>
<td>0.27 (109.47**)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Variables added at Step 3</td>
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<tr>
<td>(Transformational leadership) (TF)</td>
<td>1.02**</td>
<td>0.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Team identification (TI)</td>
<td>0.59**</td>
<td>0.18</td>
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<tr>
<td>TF×TI</td>
<td>−0.11*</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall $R^2 (F$ change)</td>
<td>0.31 (9.57*)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Unstandardized regression coefficients are shown. *$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.01$.
indirect effects for 10,000 bootstrapped samples and calculated the 95% confidence interval by computing indirect effects at the 2.5th and 97.5th percentiles. The bootstrapped unstandardized indirect effect was 0.15, and the 95% confidence interval ranged from 0.06 to 0.27. Thus, the indirect effect was statistically significant (the confidence intervals did not cross 0) and results demonstrated a full mediation effect (the effect of transformational leadership on crisis leader potential became non-significant when trust was added as an independent variable in the regression equation).

H4 predicted a conditional indirect effect of transformational leadership on crisis leadership potential (through trust in the leader) based on the level of team identification. To test the moderated mediation hypotheses as a first stage moderation model (trust mediating the moderated effect of transformational leadership on crisis leader potential), an index of moderated mediation was computed (Hayes, 2015). The index shows the strength and significance of the conditional indirect effect. The significance of this conditional indirect effect was tested using bootstrapping procedures and employed the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2015) in SPSS version 24. The bootstrapped unstandardized indirect effect was 0.15 for low levels of team identification, with the 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.07 to 0.28; the indirect effect was 0.08 for high levels of team identification with the 95% confidence interval ranging from 0.02 to 0.21. The overall index of moderated mediation (the indirect effect of transformational leadership on crisis leader potential through trust given varying levels of team identification impacting trust) was −0.03, with the 95% confidence interval ranging from −0.06 to −0.01.

Discussion
In an extreme context, preparation for crises and other uncertain volatile events requires capable current and future leaders (Gasaway, 2007). Results presented here demonstrated that the more that subordinates believe that a leader engages in transformational leadership behaviors, the more the leader will report positive leadership potential in their subordinates,
creating an encouraging cycle of leadership development (Day et al., 2014) for an organization involved in incremental change. Consistent with previous research (Podsakoff et al., 1990; Goodwin et al., 2011), transformational leadership was associated with trust in the leader in the context of this study in which uncertainty is the norm. Followers with high levels of trust in the leader were more likely to be evaluated by supervisors as having more potential to lead during a crisis; transformational leadership had an indirect effect on supervisory evaluations of subordinate crisis leader potential, through trust in the leader. Additionally, lower levels of identification with the team were found to strengthen the transformational leadership to trust relationship as well as the indirect effect of transformational leadership on subordinate crisis leader potential.

Theoretical and practical implications
Many leadership scholars acknowledge the relative lack of quality research and the noticeable absence of theory integration in leader development (Riggio and Reichard, 2008). Given limited research in extreme contexts, this research responds to that deficiency by exploring how transformational leadership, trust and team identification influence leadership potential in an emergency response setting. This study responds to the call to shed more light on the assertion that transformational leadership indirectly affects outcomes through trust (Jung and Avolio, 2000; Goodwin et al., 2011). It is valuable to understand that leaders who demonstrate transformational behaviors and foster trusting relationships with followers are more likely to view the follower as having future potential to lead in crisis situations. The results of the current study suggest that transformational leadership can influence both the well-being of subordinates (trust) and the well-being of the organization (developmental readiness of future leaders).

The biggest challenge faced in an extreme context might concern sensemaking as a source of collective mindfulness (Baran and Scott, 2010; Weick et al., 2008). Individuals and groups need to effectively integrate their behaviors as an incident unfolds. Leaders guide subordinates in sensemaking and reduce ambiguity for followers (Geier, 2016). The emphasis on identification with the leader, over the team, in building trust might be one way that subordinates balance respect for hierarchy with adapting to a disaster requiring collaboration – emphasizing responsiveness to the leader’s direction. The results reported here suggest that contextual influences surrounding transformational leadership especially with respect to an extreme context warrant further investigation (Hardy et al., 2010). The finding that low team identification strengthens the influence of transformational leadership on trust in the leader also suggests the need to account for the setting in which people work and the way that interactions with others influence one’s relationship with their supervisor when studying the effects of transformational leadership. In an extreme context, strong identification with a team might restrict the aspiring leader from developmental opportunities. Identifying less with the team and building a more trusting relationship with a leader who demonstrates transformational behaviors might enhance the leader’s evaluation of subordinate developmental potential or readiness. This highlights the paradox of careful planning married with spontaneous responding that require adherence to strict hierarchy while maintaining collaboration, and understanding how the results might challenge intuitive expectations when supervisors assess subordinate crisis leader potential.

This research also has practical and social implications for the organization. Ambiguous reward settings that value individual performance over team performance in advancement and promotion considerations may limit transformational leaders’ ability to increase the developmental readiness of their subordinates. A relationship built on trust between the leader and their subordinates is critical to improving future crisis leader development.

Shared mental models help members of high-reliability systems coordinate and solve problems in complex fluid task settings; however, competing interests such as division of labor...
and structural norms counter these efforts with the greatest potential for success when attention is given to developing, communicating and connecting individual’s understandings. Individual-level rewards that involve competition counter these efforts and remain the greatest challenge in the public emergency services and management settings (Bigley and Roberts, 2001).

**Strengths, limitations and future directions**

Evaluating leader development in an extreme context is a key strength of the current study. Avolio (2007) suggested that proximal context (characteristics of the organization or situation in which the leader and follower are embedded) plays a role in how leadership is enacted and the outcomes of leader behaviors. Limitations of this research include cross-sectional data, the reliance on subordinate evaluations of leader behaviors and reliance on leader evaluations of subordinate leader potential. This reliance assumes that the subordinates surveyed in this study observed all relevant behaviors of their leader and the leaders observed all subordinate behaviors. Hunter *et al.* (2007) pointed out that this assumption may be inaccurate, and a better method of assessing behaviors might be to rely on more than just perceptions of behaviors and characteristics. Thus, future research can study changes in crisis leader potential over time to add a longitudinal research design and capture peer evaluations of performance and behaviors in addition to leader evaluations.

Social desirability in responding to surveys is an important consideration in research that relies on self-reported data. We, therefore, included a measure of social desirability in responding (SDRS) to address social desirability response tendencies using a five-item scale (Hays *et al.*, 1989). Controlling for SDRS is a method for addressing bias (e.g. Reynolds, 1982). Given the setting of our study (emergency responders) and the potentially aroused emotions that a questionnaire might elicit, we directly measured and controlled for SDRS in order to examine the variance explained by the variables of interest after controlling for the effects of SDRS (Dalton and Ortegren, 2011). Thus, while we acknowledge the presence of biased responses, we report the findings and implications with more confidence given our direct measurement of SDRS and that we controlled for this in reporting our results. Additionally, Spector (2006) noted that, while a valid concern, the evidence fails to support social desirability as a general source of correlation inflating common method variance when self-reports are used. While there might be other sources of bias in our study, we believe that controlling for SDRS is an important contribution given the study setting. Including data from multiple sources also strengthens confidence in the results reported for our sample (Spector, 2006). *Post hoc* analysis to examine more implicit effects revealed that no changes were observed in the correlations between the independent and dependent variables when SDRS was controlled for by partialling (the partial correlations were no different than the bivariate correlations). SDRS was also not a moderator influencing the outcomes examined. These findings further strengthen our confidence in the results reported (Ganster *et al.*, 1983). Future research can survey multiple high-reliability organizations and involve multiple sources of information, including observations of leader behavior and subordinate performance to increase the generalizability of study findings.

It is also important to consider whether alternative moderator variables exist either between transformational leadership and trust in the leader or between trust in the leader and crisis leader potential. For example, given the unique nature of the reward system in these emergency services settings, perceptions of organizational justice might influence the indirect relationship between transformational leadership behaviors and subordinate crisis leader potential.

As noted by Scandura and Williams (2000), research often involves tradeoffs between precision, validity and generalizability. While generalizability is important, understanding leadership within certain contexts (for precision), such as the fast-paced and uncertain setting faced by fire rescue personnel, is also imperative. Future research could examine crisis leader potential in other local and cultural settings to build on the results reported here. Samples that
assess leadership and leader development across a national sample of fire rescue organizations or emergency services organizations are needed to produce results that are more generalizable. While our research contained multisource data for assessing leader development (crisis leader potential), it was limited to one organization, limiting the conclusions that can be drawn. Furthermore, Zhu and Akhtar (2013) studied transformational leadership and follower trust in the leader in a Chinese sample and noted that comparative studies in a variety of cultural contexts are needed to understand the role of trust in transformational leadership processes.

Another potential area for future research is to extend the design of the current research to include the quality of the relationship between the leader and follower, which is the focus of leader–member exchange (LMX) theory. Trust and LMX demonstrate high correlations (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002); however, trust is a consequence of LMX rather than a proxy (Brower et al., 2009). Future research could examine the role of relationship quality and trust on the association between transformational leadership and subordinate crisis leader potential in order to further understand how organizations can learn to build cognitive infrastructures that allow for simultaneous adaptive learning while maintaining performance. As noted by Weick et al. (2008) non-HROs tend to focus more on success than failure (and learning from failure) and on efficiency rather than reliability. They recognize that it is the capability to discover and manage unexpected events that can influence reliability, and transformational leaders might be uniquely suited to this.

Conclusion
In fire rescue settings, personnel need to be spontaneous to quickly determine the best solution for the life or death situations that these first responders face. Leadership research that occurs in traditional work settings often fails to capture the unique features of leadership in the more unpredictable, creative industries (Mainemelis et al., 2015). We, therefore, highlight the need for the study of unique organizations such as the fire rescue organization in this current study (Oc, 2017). In summary, the results of the current investigation detail the importance of examining the indirect effect that transformational leadership (through trust) has on valuable outcomes, such as subordinate crisis leader potential. The research conducted here provides a greater understanding of the development of crisis leader potential with the hope that it will encourage further research that examines contexts in which leader development is critically needed.

Note
1. An incomplete second-order factor has one or more first-order factors and one or more observable variables loading onto the same second-order latent variable. See Chen, West and Sousa (2006) for the initial discussion and Garcia-Barrera et al. (2017) for examples.

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Leading transitions in traumatically experienced change – a question of doing or being?

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to explore change leadership in the context of traumatically experienced change. “Being-centeredness” is proposed as a change leadership paradigm, with the leader becoming a facilitative instrument who assists restoration of a healthy working environment, healed emotions and change transitioning.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper is a conceptual research paper. Conceptualizations of being-centeredness are developed by building on the discourse of change emotions in organizations and research on change leadership.

Findings – Change interventions are experienced more traumatic than often believed. Healing of these emotions is essential to avoid stuckness. Becoming an instrument of change enables being-centered leaders to assist the emotional healings of victims and survivors when change is experienced as traumatic, promoting individual transitioning, restricting resistance to enhance change readiness and resilience.

Research limitations/implications – Although conceptualizations are supported by an abundance of research and practical experience, as with any conceptual research, it lacks direct empirical evidence to support the conceptualizations.

Practical implications – Being-centeredness is an untapped inner capacity in many change leaders and change interventions. Explicitly normalizing and promoting being-centered and the further development of this capacity in leaders will allow this latent capacity to surface from its suppressed state, to be applied overtly.

Originality/value – The paper provides a new paradigm on leaders can and should deal with acute emotions that are often experienced from change, which focus more on the way of being of leaders, than competencies or change activities that must be done. This is likely to further emotional healing, change transitioning, resilience and ultimately change success.

Keywords Change, Leadership, Emotions, Being-centered, Traumatic

Introduction

Many organizations’ recourse to increasing competitiveness is large-scale change interventions such as downsizing, outsourcing or restructuring. In a business environment where continual change became the norm, few organizations escape radical and disruptive change with its accompanying disruption and often emotional pain and trauma. With the success rate of planned change notoriously poor (Higgs and Rowland, 2010), and the importance of leadership for successful change consistently confirmed (Battilana et al., 2010; Kool and Van Dierendonck, 2012), it is apparent that new insights into change leadership are required. Burnes et al. (2018, p. 141) conclude that “despite three decades of transformation and organizational change leadership discourse, leadership is still in crisis.”

Change interventions tend not only to be rationally unsuccessful, but also emotionally disruptive, resulting in low morale and emotional pain (Byrd-Poller et al., 2017). Indeed, several studies have shown that employees who encounter rapid and severe organizational change frequently experience acute emotions, such as anger, anxiety, disorientation and depression (Marquitz et al., 2016; Smollan, 2014a; Zell, 2003). The intense emotional experience that may arise during organizational change can be experienced as traumatic (Bridges, 2003). It is thus perhaps not surprising that organizational change interventions are often met with reluctance (Peus et al., 2009). There is a growing consensus that employees’ emotional acceptance is a key factor to reduce change reluctance and promote
change success (Smollan, 2014a). However, there is still much research required on how the emotional experience of change influences change reluctance or apparent resistance (Byrd-Poller et al., 2017).

Bridges and Mitchell (2000, p. 31) make a distinction between the organizational change event and personal transition: “change is external (the different policy, practice, or structure that the leader is trying to bring about), while transition is internal (a psychological reorientation that people have to go through before the change can work).” Transition, or “healing” (Byrd-Poller et al., 2017), is the process people go through as they internalize and come to terms with their experience and the changes (Bridges, 2003). In times of disruptive change, the neglect and marginalization of emotion can have negative consequences on employees’ ability to make the transition (Clarke et al., 2007). However, change leadership praxis and research often understate the difficulty of transitioning or healing of emotionally traumatized employees (Higgs and Rowland, 2010).

Leybourne (2016) calls for urgent research on employees’ emotional transition through change. To address this need, “being-centeredness” is derived from change leadership literature and proposed as an alternative change leadership paradigm. Being-centeredness is about being fully present in the moment as the change emotions evolve, with compassion and acceptance, connecting and serving authentically to be a catalytic instrument for individuals’ healing and change transitions. Building on existing leadership theories, this paper develops a conceptual case for being-centered leadership to guide subordinates’ healing and transitioning through painful change, and thereby positively affect change success. This conceptualization shifts the focus from “doing” change management and activities (doing-centered) to enable individual’s transitions, to a more subtle “being-centeredness.” Being-centeredness is about a facilitative leader who relates to followers and their needs; a leader who is less of a heroic crusader, but is fully immersed in the change context as a transitional instrument. It is neither argued that all change is experienced traumatic by all employees, nor that other change management and leadership activities are irrelevant. That would be naïve and inappropriate. However, it is argued that being-centeredness provides a helpful change leadership paradigm for furthering the healing and transitions of the people who are experiencing traumatic change, reducing change reluctance and enhancing resilience and probability for change success.

The objective of this paper is to derive and propose a change leadership paradigm which is likely to further the journey of healing from traumatically experienced change and to promote follower’s transitioning. The context of organizational change is first explored as a foundation for being-centeredness, through reflections on resistance to change (RTC), and the emotional rollercoaster of change, sensemaking, healing and transitioning. In these discussions, propositions are offered on leadership aspects required to advance healing and transitioning. Reflections on change leadership, integrated with the propositions, provide further context to derive a definition and description of being-centeredness.

Change resistance and managing change

The term RTC is often used as an explanation for why large-scale change efforts fall short of expectations (Appelbaum et al., 2015; Hughes, 2016; Oreg, 2006). RTC refers to any apparent form of resistance by employees to the change efforts, whether active or passive (Oreg, 2006). Oreg (2006) describes three types of resistance: cognitive (evaluation of the potential benefit or disadvantages of the change), behavioral (intentions to act against change) and affective (feelings about the change). Change is often more intimidating and disturbing than what is assumed (Bailey and Raelin, 2015) and can be emotionally petrifying (Marquitz et al., 2016). Perceived impact of change has been shown to relate significantly to affective RTC (Oreg, 2006; Vakola, 2014). RTC is thus, at least partly, attributable to emotional reactions to change and the loss that might psychologically be
experienced by individuals from the change (Appelbaum et al., 2015; Burnes, 2015). It has been argued that employees do not resist change itself, but rather the emotional consequences associated with change (Vakola, 2014), or they may have difficulty with the painful transitions it implies (Bridges, 2003). Indeed, if the emotions accompanying change are not dealt with appropriately, it tends to fester in individuals psyche and increasingly inflict negative results and promote RTC (Jones and Van De Ven, 2016).

The emotional rollercoaster of change, healing and transitioning
Change often generates highly unpleasant emotions (anxiety, anger, sadness, frustration, etc.) in many employees (although not necessarily everyone) (Marquitz et al., 2016; Smollan, 2014b). The proverbial emotional rollercoaster of change emotions is routinely compared with Kübler-Ross' (1969) grief cycle, which describes the emotional states people go through when confronted with a terminal illness (Leybourne, 2016). Her grief cycle has been shown as useful to organizational changes (Marquitz et al., 2016; Smollan, 2014a), and informed at least 15 similar models, which include a “death valley,” filled with acute emotions (Elrod and Tippett, 2002).

Intense negative affect on employees’ lived experiences following downsizings is well documented (Appelbaum et al., 2015; Marquitz et al., 2016; Oreg et al., 2011; Smollan, 2014a, b; Vickers and Parris, 2007, 2010). Indeed, it is not only job losses that result in acute emotional experiences. With work central to most people’s lives, attachment to work-related aspects is often substantial (Marquitz et al., 2016). Work-related losses thus tend to be not just another adversity, but can represent a life-disrupting event that generates traumatic disturbance (De Klerk, 2007). Although the change may appear to be minor, it might be experienced as significant, even the change as apparently trivial as getting a new manager (Kearney, 2013).

Change, regardless of its nature, inevitably imposes some sort of loss for individuals (Bailey and Raelin, 2015; Papa and Maitoza, 2013). In the organizational world, this includes not only the rational loss of income, but also abstract losses such as loss of identity, perceived loss of control, loss of security and power (Smollan, 2014b). The more intense the loss is experienced, the more severe the emotional impact, to the extent that it can even be experienced as traumatic (Papa and Maitoza, 2013). When reflecting on their experience of change, it is common for people to use metaphors such as death (Zell, 2003), the loss of a limb (Bridges, 1986; De Klerk, 2007), darkness and loneliness (Barner, 2008). It is thus evident that employees can experience organizational change as traumatic, although not necessarily so. Emotional trauma is the reactive response to an event perceived to be beyond one’s control, resulting in overwhelming feelings of pain and helplessness (Byrd-Poller et al., 2017; Stuart, 1996).

Karp and Tveteraas Helgø (2009) argue that change acceptance is often low, because leaders underestimate the importance of people’s emotional experiences. Too often leaders operate from implicit mental models that emphasize focus on the organizational aspects and the rational and logical activities of change, without dealing with the emotions unfolding around them on an individual level (Barner, 2008; Graetz and Smith, 2010). It is for this reason that Moran and Brightman (2000, p. 66) argue that “change management is not about managing change!,” rather, it is about dealing with the people and their experiences. Leaders often do not accept the potential existence of trauma and grief and downplay its symptoms as RTC, treating it as something to be “fixed” (Barner, 2008). Even when leaders understand the importance of emotions, adverse emotions are often considered with suspect or denied because of entrenched practices to distance themselves from emotions (Kearney and Siegman, 2013). Consequently, emotions are suppressed in fear of stigmatization, only causing greater stuckness (Vickers and Parris, 2010). From this, the following proposition is proposed:

\[ P1 \] Furtherance of employees’ healing and transitioning requires leaders with compassion and sensitivity, with the willingness to recognize and acknowledge acute emotions and to connect emotionally with employees who experience it.
Sensemaking, change transition and trauma healing

Acknowledging and working with change emotions is essential for sensemaking and a central requirement for successful transitioning (Balogun and Johnson, 2005). Sensemaking is about individuals’ interpretation of events and their ability to articulate the meaning thereof in a way that it can be used as a platform for going forward (Klarner et al., 2011; Weick et al., 2005). Sensemaking is retrospective, one can only make sense of past events. However, its outcomes influence future behavior (Kearney, 2013). Sensemaking can be accomplished when employees acknowledge their lived experiences and beliefs (Marquitz et al., 2016). Sensemaking is a socially dialogic process, evolving as people interact with their leaders, peers and subordinates (Balogun and Johnson, 2005; Lawrence, 2015). Bridges (1986) and Lawrence (2015) found that apparent RTC is indeed a call to engagement and dialogue. The healing power of dialogue on change emotions has been demonstrated (Barner, 2008; De Klerk, 2007).

When Kübler-Ross’s (1969) grief cycle is applied to organizational change, there tends to be the assumption that all employees will automatically progress through all its phases. However, De Klerk (2007) demonstrates that when change is not life-threatening, people can get stuck in anger or depression. Even terminally ill patients do not automatically go through the whole grief cycle, but must be able to express emotions, mourn the impending loss of life and receive assistance to “break through their unconscious defenses in order to progress through the cycle” (Kübler-Ross, 1969, p. 234). Inhibition of emotional expression tends to worsen the intensity of the emotions, and can even lead to emotional exhaustion (Menges et al., 2015). Through emotional expression, people normalize their experiences and find the energy for transition (Vivian and Hormann, 2015). When employees are supported by leaders who are aware of their own emotions, are sensitive to the traumatic effects of change, have sincere compassion, listening empathetically, it allows emotional expression (Byrd-Poller et al., 2017).

Sensemaking of organizational change takes time, filled with strong grief-related emotions (Kearney, 2013). Without processing the grief associated with the complex change, it would be difficult for employees to make sense of events and successfully transition into a future state (Marquitz et al., 2016). As the death of a loved one requires grieving and mourning, complex change or profound loss in an organizational setting may require a similar process for employees to heal emotionally and to promote their transitioning (Elrod and Tippett, 2002; Kearney, 2013; Smollan, 2014a). Through grieving and mourning, the intensity of pain and grief reduces, eventually making it possible to return to healthy functioning (Berzoff, 2011). Grieving and mourning require compassionate patience; suggestions to “get over it” or that everything is for the best interferes substantially with re-connecting with the loss and becoming content (Bridges, 1986; Zell, 2003). From this, the following proposition is proposed:

\[ P2. \] Furthering sensemaking and healing requires leaders with the willingness to engage with their own vulnerability and that of others, in order to provide not only explicit, but also implicit permission to express their emotions, to grieve and to mourn to completion.

Leadership for healing and transitioning when change is experienced as traumatic

The intimate nature of an individual’s experience of traumatic loss can promote the idea that transitioning is a private matter. However, when change is experienced as traumatic, sensemaking and emotional healing are unlike to happen in isolation or in private (Niederhoffer and Pennebaker, 2005). Rather, it requires a social and interactional process, because public disclosure of one’s losses and emotions has remarkable potential to alleviate normalize emotional upheavals (Altmaier, 2011). Sharing normalizes and destigmatizes
when validated by one’s peers and managers (Neimeyer et al., 2014). Leaders can therefore not be excluded from the healing and transitioning processes, but are active participants in the transitioning process (Bridges, 2003; Byrd-Poller et al., 2017). Leaders cannot eliminate suffering, nor can they ask people to check their emotions at the door. But leaders have a critical responsibility in facilitating the trauma healing process and help people through transitioning (Bridges and Mitchell, 2000).

Although an employee assistance program may assist individuals therapeutically to deal with complicated grief symptoms in times of traumatic change, employees look at their leaders as symbols of hope and care (Kouzes and Posner, 1999). This is a leadership role and responsibility that cannot be delegated to change consultants (Galpin, 1995). When employees are hurting and trying their best to cope, perceived leadership absence or leadership aloofness is likely to make the situation worse. Even inspirational charisma may impede change progress. Indeed Menges et al. (2015, p. 626) found that “followers under the influence of leaders’ charisma tend to suppress the expression of emotions ([…]the ‘awestruck effect’), […] Awestruck followers may suffer from expressive inhibition even as charismatic leaders stir their hearts.” On the other hand, compassionate presence, kindness, understanding and flexibility help individuals to cope and probably reduce some of their anger and resistance (Appelbaum et al., 2015). The way the leader is and how he/she is experienced is what counts, rather than what he/she does or how he/she behaves (Patterson, 2015). As Kouzes and Posner (1999, pp. 145-146) note: “it’s not so much what we do as what we are […] People don’t follow your technique: they follow you.” From this, the following proposition is proposed:

P3: It is the responsibility of leaders to restore a healthy working environment and facilitate healed emotions and transitions. This role, which cannot be outsourced or delegated, is about being emotionally present and available.

**Change leadership**

Research consistently confirms that leaders influence acceptance of change by employees (Battilana et al., 2010; Kool and Van Dierendonck, 2012), and there are numerous studies that offer lists of leadership competencies, styles and activities (Battilana et al., 2010; By et al., 2016; Magsaysay and Hechanova, 2017). However, research could neither identify a single best change leadership style nor a single set of competencies. Indeed, Ford and Ford (2012) conclude that “available research indicates there is no definitive formula to the leadership of change” (p. 22).

Although there is no consensus on which leadership style is most effective for change, three styles are regularly linked with change success, namely: servant leadership (SL) (Hoch et al., 2018; Hunter et al., 2013; Kool and Van Dierendonck, 2012; De Sousa and Van Dierendonck, 2014), authentic leadership (AL) (Agote et al., 2016; Bakari et al., 2017; Rodriguez et al., 2017) and transformational leadership (TL) (Van Dierendonck et al., 2014; Holten et al., 2015; Menges et al., 2015; Peus et al., 2009). In addition, with ample evidence that change is emotionally laden (Barner, 2008), it is not surprising that leaders’ emotional intelligence (EI) has often been found to relate to change success (Chrusciel, 2006; Smollan and Parry, 2011).

Although there are associations between SL, AL and TL (Banks et al., 2016; Beck, 2014), studies point to these styles being complementary rather than not substitutable (Beck, 2014; Hoch et al., 2018). A consistent finding is that SL and AL mainly focus more on the follower, whereas TL focuses more on leadership effectiveness and organizational activity (Van Dierendonck et al., 2014; Rodriguez et al., 2017). Several aspects of all three styles are helpful in leading the healing of emotional trauma that may arise from change interventions in order to facilitate De Klerk’s (2007) notion of healing and Bridges’ (1986, 2003) notion of change transition.
Respective characteristics of AL, SL, TL and EI that have shown to correlate with effective change and particularly relate conceptually to employees’ transitions during traumatically experienced change are noted in Table I (Agote et al., 2016; Bakari et al., 2017; Banks et al., 2016; Bass and Steidlmeier, 1999; Beck, 2014; Chrusciel, 2006; Van Dierendonck et al., 2014; Hirst et al., 2016; Hoch et al., 2018; Hunter et al., 2013; Magsaysay and Hechanova, 2017; Rodríguez et al., 2017; Smollan and Parry, 2011). Table I is indicative, rather than exhaustive.

Table I provides support for the findings from the structured review of change leadership studies by Ford and Ford (2012, p. 1), who conclude that “the leadership of change is more complex than envisioned, involving multiple forms of leadership engaged in different approaches, behaviors, and activities.” It is from this perspective, and based on the propositions offered earlier, that being-centeredness is offered as a change leadership paradigm.

**Being-centered leadership**
The purpose of being-centered leadership is to implicitly facilitate subordinates to organize their emerging experiences in ways that promote sensemaking and assist them with their healing journeys in order to achieve transition. Being-centeredness is not suggested as a new or different leadership style, nor is it another change leadership technique or competency. Being-centered leadership builds on AL, SL, TL and EI, capitalizing on their relevant characteristics (Table I), to offer a complementary change leadership paradigm that is likely to assist employees with healing and transitioning when change is experienced as traumatic. This conceptualization of being-centeredness is illustrated in Figure 1.

As demonstrated in Figure 1, being-centeredness can be understood as the confluence of the AL, SL, EI and TL aspects that promote healing and transitioning as explicated in Table I. When Figure 1 is read in conjunction with Table I, it can be seen that, among other aspects: AL contributes such as being fully present as a trustworthy human being to being-centeredness, SL contributes selfless listening and interaction in order to assist and serve others, TL adds individualized concern and making engaging interpersonal connections, whereas EI adds compassion that results from self-awareness and the awareness of others’ emotions. Being-centeredness is an eclectic change leadership paradigm in which the inherently human aspects of listening, reflection and voicing are central to facilitating transitioning (Lawrence, 2015). Although being-centeredness manifests as certain leadership actions and behaviors, and may make use of some change management techniques, it extends beyond these aspects to the leader becoming a

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<th>Transformational leadership</th>
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**Emotional intelligence**
Awareness of own emotions and appropriate expression
Understanding others’ emotional experiences and connecting with it
Empathy
Responding sensitively and constructively to others’ emotions

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<th>Table I. AL, SL, TL and EI characteristics to lead healing and transitions</th>
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catalytic instrument for change and transition. The use of the “self-as-instrument” is a well-known and important concept to enact change in clients for therapists, executive coaches and OD practitioners and consultants (Cheung-Judge, 2012; Hanson, 2000; Jamieson et al., 2010; Keister and Paranjpey, 2012; Pieterse et al., 2013). Although being-centeredness relates to this concept of using the “self-as-instrument,” it does not equate to it. In the context of organizational change, the leader does not become the therapist or consultant to explicitly coach and guide transition. Rather, the being-centered leader indirectly and implicitly facilitates transitioning by being comprehensively and attentively present in the moment, with non-judgmental observation, listening and reflection, being compassionate and making unconditional connections.

Being-centeredness is not about being “soft” or becoming unduly familiar with subordinates. Rather, it is about having the courage and humility to abandon illusions of perfection and to accept that one does not have to be heroic, appear to be strong or have all the answers, and that skillful application of sophisticated techniques is not always the best ways to lead organizational change. Being-centeredness is about recognizing and embracing one’s own humanity (Brecher, 2017), and the ability to accept it not only as a character strength (Hoekstra et al., 2008), but as a strength in leading individuals’ transitioning during change (Bluckert, 2005). When individuals can successfully transition on a personal level, being-centeredness should indirectly have a positive impact on change also on the organizational level (Bridges and Mitchell, 2000).

From these conceptualizations, the following proposition is proposed:

**P4.** Being-centeredness emerges from AL, SL, TL and EI, capacitating leaders to become catalytic instruments of change in themselves. This is likely to assist employees with their healing and transitioning journeys, resulting in less change reluctance and more resilience, promoting potential change success.

Being-centeredness is conceptualized mainly according to three ways of being: being fully present in the moment as it evolves, just by being another vulnerable and fallible human being; with unconditional compassion and acceptance of others’ potentially painful experiences from organizational change interventions; and connecting and serving authentically to become a catalytic healing instrument to individuals’ change transitions.

**Being fully present in the moment**

Traditionally, leaders are expected to be strong, willful, and have answers. In contrast, being-centeredness requires refraining from giving answers; answers emerge from the group as conversations unfold (De Jong, 2011). This requires what Scharmer (2008, p. 58)
describes as “presencing,” the capacity for being present in the moment and sensitive to its needs. Presencing means acting from a deep connection to one’s inner source of being (Scharmer, 2009), building healing relationships based on compassion, deep listening and collaboration (Senge et al., 2015). This puts special demands on leaders as there are no easy answers, or clear-cut recipes to “being” and presencing.

Although compassion may manifest through behaviors and acts, true compassion is a way of being, not necessarily an act in itself. Similarly, being emotionally present and approachable present as a way of being, not necessarily a behavior or an act. Being-centeredness means the change leader is less focused on ego-centered “doing” change (e.g. activities that drive specific goals) or “having” (e.g. competencies, skills or traits) (Fry and Kriger, 2009). Rather, the leader let go of know-it-all attitudes to become vulnerable and humane, and develops an objective lens to become aware of and accept his or her feelings, biases and thoughts and that of others (Jamieson et al., 2010; Keister and Paranjpey, 2012). This awareness and acceptance of the self and the similar feelings, biases and thought of others, facilitate making emotional connections with subordinates and their emotional needs (De Jong, 2011; Kouzes and Posner, 1999). From these connections, the leader becomes fully immersed in the reality of the change context and its accompanying emotions as it unfolds.

Bridges and Mitchell (2000, p. 34) reason that “transition leadership skills cannot be found in a set of theoretical leadership skills […] it is a personal and completely customized process,” according to “what the situation demands.” Being-centeredness is about being present and flexible within the demands of the situation as it evolves. This relates to Brown’s (2012) notion of leading change with post-conventional consciousness: leaders who work from a deep inner foundation, grounding their work in transpersonal meaning, accessing non-rational ways of knowing and connecting and leading adaptively through dialogue with the system. The being-centered leader acts as an authentic servant and guides through the emotions of change, implicitly facilitating the progression of others through their transitions (Elrod and Tippett, 2002).

Being fully present requires a high level of personal awareness and willingness to engage with the vulnerability of one’s existence (Higgs and Rowland, 2010). It is about appreciating the symbiotic relationships between oneself and one’s followers, and appreciating the power of discourse to give expression to emotions and facilitate sensemaking and transition (Burnes et al., 2018). When fully present, the leader immerses completely in his or her humanity, what Frankl (1988, p. 74) describes as “homo patiens” – the suffering person who knows how to mold his or her sufferings and those of others into an achievement. This inherent human capacity is often locked down by societal expectations about what leaders should do. Key to unlocking this capacity is making a connection with one’s inner soul – the locus of one’s felt experience and inner personal world (Fry and Kriger, 2009).

Unconditional compassion and acceptance

To counter emotional reactions, change leaders often become dispassionate, with little concern for those who suffer (Claire et al., 2006). Or even worse, compassion is faked through surface acting of “appropriate” behaviors and words. Compassion and acceptance are about being in a truly connecting moment with others’ experiences and needs as the change unfolds, without giving answers. Attributions of a leader’s sincerity have a significant influence on the perceived compassion and resulting trust (Caza et al., 2015). Because the compassion and emotional connection in being-centeredness is real and sincere, it facilitates deep relational connections between leaders and their subordinates (Cheung-Judge, 2012).

Compassion and acceptance are inherently other-regarding. Compassion is the awareness that others are suffering, which moves people to behave in such ways to aid in relieving the other’s anguish or make it more tolerable (Zenteno-Hidalgo and Geddes, 2012). Acceptance is rooted in presencing, letting go of judgments and being open to lead
according to whatever is emerging (Scharmer, 2009). Non-judgmental, empathic listening gives gestalt to compassion. Listening is about opening one’s mind and soul to hear not only the words that the others speak, but also connecting to their emotions and implicit messages (Scharmer, 2009). Compassion ignites the process of bringing leaders close to their people to make a healing connection. The physical and emotional availability of a compassionate leader helps to restore the sense of betrayal employees may experience (Kool and Van Dierendonck, 2012). Compassion and acceptance allow a psychological space where transition can happen, a place without judgment, filled with deep listening with an open heart and compassion (Kouzes and Posner, 1999; Scharmer, 2008).

Resilient individuals are able to build a safe and restorative intrapsychic space, protecting them from collapsing in an overpowering experience (Vanderpol, 2002). Leaders cannot create a restorative intrapsychic space on people’s behalf, but they can create a restorative psychological environment in which their people can experience similar benefits. In restorative spaces, the ego-centric urge to take charge, “do” change management activities, or top-down monologues are replaced by presencing. This requires suspending giving answers, but having the courage to live with discomfort and uncertainty as the discourse unfolds (De Jong, 2011). Even when the leader does not have answers or cannot offer any consolation; being present with compassion and acceptance, sharing honest perspectives promotes healing.

Connecting and serving authentically to become an instrument for transition
Being an instrument for transition shows up in how one appears, talks and presents oneself to connect and serve authentically (Jamieson et al., 2010). It also involves reflection of the situation as it evolves; for instance to understand what is happening, what the conversation is really about, where does one as the leader fit in this, what are one’s experiences and how do they influence you, and what is required (Claire et al., 2006). It emphasizes the need of awareness in leaders to mindfully bring their own skills, biases, needs and fears into their awareness on an intrapersonal and interpersonal level (Keister and Paranjpey, 2012), yet remaining in a leadership role with the responsibility to give effect to the required changes on an organizational level.

Reflection is an essential process in being truly present to connect to one’s inner soul and serve authentically as an instrument of transition (Cheung-Judge, 2012; Jamieson et al., 2010; Patterson, 2015; Pieterse et al., 2013). By reflecting on one’s experiences of being the force behind the change, yet simultaneously a container for others’ acute emotions, one can better understand one’s own emotional distress. This allows one to get in touch with one’s own insecurities and develop insight into the influence of others’ emotions on oneself and one’s behavior, enabling one to connect and serve more authentically and compassionately (Higgs and Rowland, 2010). Making these connections enables leaders to assist people to move beyond traumatic experiences, toward contentment and building hope for the future (Senge et al., 2015).

The being-centered change leader finds security from within and is thus less likely to feel threatened by the presence of grief and mourning, and less inclined to mobilize deterring defenses (Hormann and Vivian, 2005). This enhances the willingness to acknowledge and recognize trauma and grief symptoms, and the courage and patience to allow the full process of grief and mourning (Bailey and Raelin, 2015).

Jung offered the archetype of the “wounded healer,” suggesting that one’s own wounds can carry curative power for others (Martin, 2011). In this archetype, the leader’s emotional wounds become a healing component for others. Immense healing power can emerge from a leader’s woundedness, originating from his own experience of the change and from being a vulnerable human being. Within the context of a traumatically experienced change intervention, being-centeredness is about being aware and understanding of one’s own wounds and processing them to prevent them from interfering with the healing relationship with others (Martin, 2011). This requires objectivity observations of the self and a skilled
depth of self-awareness, whilst still focusing outside oneself on the needs of the subordinates (Jamieson et al., 2010; Seashore et al., 2004). Woundedness is just another metaphor for being fully human, which challenges narcissistic illusions of omnipotence and forces us to get in touch with our vulnerabilities. For ego-centric leaders, woundedness is a shame to be kept a hidden secret, masqueraded as “professionalism” (Martin, 2011), whereas being-centered leaders are willing to expose their woundedness and humanity to make authentic, serving connections. Through self-awareness, one gains greater consciousness, leading to a holistic practice where the leaders’ beingness and work roles develop together to promote humanity in others (Jamieson et al., 2010).

Discussion

We may not assume that employees cannot sometimes experience change as traumatic, or that they will progress automatically through traumatic change toward making the required transition. Being-centeredness is likely to assist employees with their healing and transitioning journey. Although being-centered change leadership may sound like almost super-human competencies leaders are expected to have, it is not a competency or even a task (Bridges and Mitchell, 2000). Being-centeredness is an intrapersonal process, which manifests interpersonally. Indeed, it is the humane aspects of vulnerability and fallibility that adds much to the genuineness of being-centeredness. The leader just has to be human, be fully present with an open heart, with compassion and acceptance, to make authentic, serving connections. This capacity is arguably latent in most human beings, but comes from the courageous choice to interact from a vulnerable foundation rather than position, role or rank (Karp and Tveteraas Helgo, 2009). Although being-centeredness can develop more in everyone, the most important thing is to allow and encourage it to surface. By normalizing and promoting being-centeredness, this paper allows this latent leadership capacity to surface from its suppressed state.

Implications, limitations and recommendations

Perhaps the most important practical implication of being-centeredness for change transitioning is that it should be acknowledged and accepted as a change leadership paradigm that has much potential to facilitate transitioning. There is a perilous mindset in many organizations, which assumes that provided the organizational aspects of change are dealt with, employees will automatically make the required transitioning on a personal level (De Klerk, 2007). However, leaders need to realize that organizational change can be more intimidating, disrupting and disturbing than what is often assumed (Bailey and Raelin, 2015; Jacobs et al., 2013). When change is then experienced as traumatic, focusing predominantly on the organizational aspects of change is unlikely to assist employees’ personal transitioning. Rather, the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of change leadership require attention and encouragement. Because being-centeredness encompasses a focus on the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of change leadership, it has the potential to make a substantial contribution to individuals’ transitioning and therefore to increase the probability of success of change programs on an organizational level.

Once being-centeredness is acknowledged and accepted as a change leadership paradigm when change is experienced as traumatic, it should be actively encouraged and promoted in change programs, change leadership practices and leadership development programs. Change programs that do not directly address or allow for being-centeredness should incorporate sufficient acceptance, attention and scope for it. Change programs that do not directly address or allow for being-centered interactions need to be designed and conducted in ways to encourage and provide for opportunities for the interpersonal interaction of leaders with subordinates in a being-centered way.
Leadership programs, especially change leadership programs, should be expanded to provide a being-centered focus and incorporate opportunities for leaders to develop their being-centered capacity beyond the cognitive knowledge of change management and change techniques. Leadership development programs that already include aspects of intrapersonal and interpersonal development can benefit by embracing being-centeredness as explicated in this paper. General leadership development programs can also make a contribution to individual’s transitions and change success if expanded to specifically attend to developing leaders’ capacity of, and courage for being-centeredness.

In the development and promotion of being-centered leadership, organizations should avoid the temptation of defining it as an endless list of competencies. Being-centeredness has been explicated in detail in this paper to provide construct clarity and motivate its value. But being-centeredness is actually a liberating paradigm as it basically entails authentic serving, and genuineness without the need of having much knowledge, skills or answers. It is a basic human capacity that can arguably be developed further in any person who is reasonably mentally healthy and self-aware, willing to accept vulnerability as a strength and to truly connect with others without having answers, but with compassion and desire to work on moving beyond egocentricity. Development of being-centeredness and preparation for change leaders to assimilate this paradigm, should create opportunities for the development of uniquely human capacities, such as personal awareness, vulnerability and compassion, curtailing one’s ego, becoming comfortable with discomfort in order to work with what is emerging in the moment, and connecting with others as fellow human beings. This requires change and leadership programs in which much more attention is given to reflective practices and reflective ability to enhance self-awareness, awareness of other’s experiences and needs and presencing.

As with any conceptual research, this paper has limitations. Conceptualizations are supported by evidence from many years’ experience as a change leader and facilitator, expanded with research on change and change leadership. However, there is a need to substantiate the conceptualizations with evidence from empirical research. For instance, more empirical research is required to assess the prevalence and outcomes of the dimensions of being-centeredness in order to confirm or reject the suggestions and propositions in this paper. Research on the outcomes and lived experiences of employees in cases where being-centered leadership did happen vis a vis where it did not, will provide evidence on its effectiveness to assist employees’ transitioning. Developmental programs to enhance being-centeredness should be developed, conducted and assessed empirically in order to build a stronger cadre of being-centered leaders.

**In conclusion**

I anticipate that the conceptualizations will stimulate more debate and research on being-centered change leadership. The conceptualizations complement literature on change leadership, articulating an improved understanding of the emotional work of organizational change, a leadership paradigm to facilitate emotional transition. It is arguably possible that not everyone will be able to build substantial being-centered capacity, notwithstanding excellent development programs. But this is acceptable, as even some sincere being-centered presencing is better than nothing, even when making honest mistakes.

**References**


Further reading


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Catalyzing capacity: absorptive, adaptive, and generative leadership

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Abstract

Purpose – Organizations increasingly operate under volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) conditions. Traditional command-and-control leadership can be ineffective in such chaotic environments. The purpose of this paper is to outline an alternative model to help leaders and organizations navigate effectively through VUCA environments. By developing three fundamental capacities (absorptive, adaptive and generative), leaders can cultivate organizations capable of continuous synchronization with their fitness landscapes. Central tenets of the framework include diversity, slack, learning, humility, reflection in action and abductive logic.

Design/methodology/approach – This framework is designed based on literature insights, conceptual analysis and experts’ judgment. The paper integrates knowledge from a variety of disciplines and interprets them through the lens of complex adaptive systems.

Findings – This paper argues for a process centered, contemplative approach to organizational leadership and development. By providing the underlying rationale for the proposed interventions (e.g. Ashby’s law of requisite variety), the paper also reorients busy leaders’ mental models to show why these time investments are worth implementing.

Practical implications – This actionable framework can help leaders and organizations be more effective operating in a VUCA context.

Originality/value – This paper provides a historic context as to why prediction and certainty are favored leadership strategies, why these approaches are no longer suitable and specific steps leaders can take to develop absorptive, adaptive and generative capacities to transform their organizations. Its scholarly contribution is the synthesis of disparate bodies of literature, weaving those multiple academic perspectives into a practical roadmap to enhance organizational leadership.

Keywords Change, Leadership, Complexity, Adaptive, Absorptive, Generative

Introduction

More than 2,000 years ago, Plato’s (1941) Allegory of the Cave suggested that people could be imprisoned by false reality if they became constrained by limited observations and perceptions. Escape from this prison becomes possible as they begin to question their interpretations, get feedback from others, and open themselves up to other possibilities. In the spirit of that ancient tale, this paper considers leadership as a portal for individuals and organizations to transcend their current situations and realize new potential opportunities. Plato’s message about the value of reflective understanding still rings true, and is perhaps more important than ever in today’s global environments characterized by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (VUCA).

Leaders can catalyze people and firms to make this shift in a variety of ways. Examples include shaping stakeholder perceptions (Cotton et al., 2017; Johnson et al., 2017), activating organizational performance (Rego et al., 2015) and spearheading community change (Folta et al., 2012). This paper argues that not just any style of leadership will do, however. Its claims proceed as follows. First, it outlines the rationale for why operating in a context of
VUCA and chronic change requires a new approach to leadership. Next, it suggests a reason why this shift has been difficult. The paper then describes three capacities leaders must develop to achieve this shift: absorptive capacity (diversity, meaning making and slack), adaptive capacity (placing emphases on learning and asking the right questions) and generative capacity (developing a design mindset guided by abduction, the logic of potentiality). As leaders make these shifts, they open up new possibilities for the vitality and sustainability of their organizations.

**The problem**

The greatest danger in times of turbulence is not the turbulence; it is to act with yesterday’s logic (Peter Drucker).

Complexity and uncertainty have emerged as important themes in leadership literature (Hunt, 2004). Over the last 30 years, people and organizations have become more connected; the speed of communication has increased; more information is accessible immediately; and more diversity exists among people and institutions. To deal with this ever more complex operating environment, leadership requires a systems perspective that considers the dynamic, nonlinear nature of interactions, especially at upper levels of organizations (McCauley, 2004).

This perspective demands the development of more sophisticated conceptual maps (Jacobs and Jaques, 1990) to help people make sense of their environment and generate more appropriate responses (Weick, 1979). Because change has become the norm, these maps need to be flexible to take in new information as it becomes available, able to transcend cause-and-effect logic and accommodate thinking about time over longer horizons (Hunt, 2004), and able to accommodate diverse perspectives of multiple stakeholders. Further, they must enable spatial conceptualization across networks rather than organizing information in a linear manner (Jacobs and McGee, 2001).

Creativity is another essential component of these conceptual maps, because leaders typically must work with novelty that requires generation of new understandings and solutions (McCauley, 2004). In fact, empirical evidence has identified that embracing multiple styles of cognition is a hallmark of exceptional leaders (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Schaubroeck et al., 2011). These various forms of cognitive capacities include ability to foster meaning making and trust through shared communication, ability to focus attention, ability to create empowering opportunities, willingness to take risks, optimism rather than fearfulness and self-awareness (Bennis and Nanus, 1985; Schaubroeck et al., 2011).

If the literature is so clear on what cognitive capacities are needed, why are they not more prevalent? Organizational science scholar Donald Schón (1983) argued that it was because analytical thinking – what he called technical-rational logic – has emerged as the dominant and unquestioned epistemology in modern society. Schón traced the origin of technical-rationality back to Positivism, a philosophy originating in the nineteenth century. The emergence of Positivism stemmed from the attempt to apply technological capabilities that were emerging at that time in science and industry to other fields for the betterment of humanity. The core assumption was that every problem was solvable and that outcomes could be controlled if approached in a logical, orderly manner. Hence Positivism accepted only certain types of knowledge as valid, specifically empirical, analytical and logically necessary propositions.

In the twentieth century, Positivistic epistemology gained further popularity as it came to be seen as a way to create wealth, often through prediction and control (Schón, 1983). However, the social unrest of the 1960s raised awareness of the limitations of the technical-rational model. People became increasingly aware of complex aspects of reality
that technical-rational analysis could not adequately address. These included change, novelty and uncertainty – qualities that did not fit into the empirical paradigm of knowledge creation and acquisition. Instead of viewing reality through positivism’s lens as a singular “thing” that exists “out there,” leadership and organizational scholars have come to accept many other forms of scientific inquiry such as social constructionism (Berger and Luckmann, 1966), conventionalism and realism (Nellhaus, 1993). Yet, the positivist mindset that insists complex, paradoxical and ambiguous phenomena be broken down into simple black-or-white compartments remains dominant in many organizations (Ang, 2011). We argue for the need to adjust leadership styles to a complexity mindset that recognizes interdependencies, interaction effects across multiple levels and the need to catalyze the latent potential of organizations (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007).

An organization’s operating environment is considered complex when it includes three aspects. The first is substantial interdependence among multiple people involved in the decision making. The second is the existence of competing values that necessitate a tradeoff (i.e. a return on one value can only be obtained at a cost to the other). A third aspect is high uncertainty, where there is imperfect correspondence between information and the environment (Steinbruner, 2002). Given that organizations increasingly operate under VUCA conditions, we adopt a complexity stance toward cognition and capacity build so that organizations can move beyond positivistic approaches that no longer fit VUCA environments.

Complexity frequently entails emergence, where interactions at the micro level produce a qualitatively different phenomenon at the macro level. For example, fishes swimming individually can form a cohesive pattern (a school). Rather than a single fish imposing order, the fishes self-organize autonomously by following a few simple behavioral rules (e.g. stay close but not too close to your neighbor). Self-organization is a mechanism by which systems can spontaneously optimize energy distribution to create a more stable structure under dynamic conditions (Rickles et al., 2007). Similarly, we argue in the following pages that under VUCA conditions, leaders can catalyze capacity of the organization to self-organize by developing absorptive, adaptive and generative capacities. Table I outlines the different mental models and processes that promote the shift from positivist to complex systems perspective, from controlling to embracing VUCA.

New ways of leading
Using conceptual analysis (Machado and Silva, 2007), this paper discusses how leaders can help their organizations overcome the limitations of technical-rational and positivist thinking when operating in VUCA conditions by developing three cognitive competencies – absorptive, adaptive and generative capacity. As will be shown, these three capacities enable organizations to more effectively interact with their operating environment, receive and process information, and create value through resource transformation and innovation. They support complexity because they promote self-organization, emergence and adaptability. They overcome positivistic limitations by embracing uncertainty as a resource rather than trying to control, predict or eliminate it. This section presents the three competencies in more detail, explains why they are crucial in VUCA environments, and briefly suggests ways to develop these competencies.

Absorptive capacity
As information flows ever faster, organizations must be able to quickly identify relevant data, assimilate that information, and apply it in ways that create value. This ability, known
as absorptive capacity, enables a firm to dynamically and continuously innovate (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990; Todorova and Durisin, 2007). For example, a survey of 4,000 CEOs in Spain found that absorptive capacity is an important source of competitive advantage for their firms. This was particularly true in industries operating in turbulent environments.
Absorptive capacity is co-created and arises through interactions at multiple levels, both within the firm and between the organization and external environment (McKelvey, 1997; Van den Bosch et al., 1999). Drivers of absorptive capacity include learning relationships, environmental conditions, and internal and external knowledge. Mediators include a firm’s structures, processes and strategies as well as the mental models of its members (Lane et al., 2006). As a firm develops absorptive capacity, this enhances its ability to explore, exploit, innovate and rejuvenate (Lane et al., 2006; Todorova and Durisin, 2007).

This paper argues that diversity, meaning making and slack are three essential yet overlooked aspects of absorptive capacity. Diversity is important because it expands capacity to absorb complexity. Ashby’s (1991) law of requisite variety postulates that “the internal diversity of any self-regulating system must match the variety and complexity of its environment if it is to deal with the challenges posed by that environment” (Morgan, 2006, pp. 108-109). This suggests a firm will be successful to the degree that its internal diversity mirrors the level of external diversity of its operating environment. Offering support for this claim, a study of 95 randomly sampled companies on the S&P 500 Index found that boards of directors with higher gender diversity produced better corporate social performance (Hafsi and Turgut, 2013). Similarly, age diversity was found to have a positive effect on organizational productivity for creative tasks (Backes-Gellner and Veen, 2013).

Besides demographic diversity, organizations may also employ functional diversity (assembling teams based on roles and expertise). A mixed methods study of management team members in a Fortune 100 consumer products company found that intrapersonal functional diversity (the mix between specialists and generalists on a team) was especially valuable in promoting information sharing (Bunderson and Sutcliffe, 2002). While diversity is important for moral and social justice reasons, these empirical studies and others (De Dreu and West, 2001; Richard, 2000; Somers, 2006) suggest that diversity in multiple dimensions (e.g. expertise, ethnicity, age, locales and worldviews) enables organizations to improve decision making, performance and competitive advantage. Diversity increases firms’ information intake and processing capabilities, enabling them better to absorb the variety that exists in their external environment. Organizations that fail to diversify risk withdrawing into the cave, becoming misaligned with their operating context and thus incapable of identifying and processing new information.

Meaning making is another fundamental aspect of absorptive capacity. Also known as sensemaking (Weick, 1995), this dimension is grounded in the science of semiotics, the study of signs, signals and communication processes (Desouza and Hensgen, 2005). Beyond the technical-rational, analytic processing of information, meaning making considers how new understanding evolves through discourse and dialogue (Bohm, 2004). Employees who engage in meaning making open up new possibilities for their organizations. For example, employees who drove organizational change did so by helping the firm make sense of external threats and opportunities in a way that could be understood and acted upon by other employees and managers. This sensemaking capacity played a pivotal role in the firm’s long-term survival (Jones, 2006). It also helped employees in the firm re-conceptualize power relationships, becoming more vocal and less deferential in organizational decision making. Similarly, Easterby-Smith et al. (2008) found that the capacity to make meaning for self and others promotes better information access, flow and application as well as managing and reconfiguring organizational power relations.

Sensemaking is a socio-cognitive process because it combines and aligns individual and shared mental representations (Bergman et al., 2015). For example, a study of 3,596 new product development firms found that creation of new knowledge and figuring out new uses for that knowledge were socially constructed through sensemaking processes (Mohrman et al., 2003). Meaning making is also a recursive process that connects micro and macro levels of sensemaking processes (Brown et al., 2015) by linking subjective experiences among
individual, dyad, group and organizational levels (Drazin et al., 1999). Sensemaking is not linear, because action rather than planning often ignites it. This retrospection blurs temporal sequencing as new collective understanding arises (Thomas et al., 1993; Weick, 1979).

While cognition is typically approached in terms of imposing order on an uncertain situation, meaning making entails metacognition to accommodate, reconcile and reconfigure multiple viewpoints that often seem initially opposed (Varela, 1987). Often, this process of reconfiguration results in initial confusion that may appear as disorder (Griffor, 1989). It therefore requires cognitive flexibility, a quality that can be promoted through relationships with co-workers. A study of middle managers during a restructuring initiative, for example, found that changes in schema development were socially negotiated through lateral social interactions with other managers (Balogun and Johnson, 2004).

A third aspect of absorptive capacity is slack, the excess resources at a firm’s disposal at a given planning interval (Voss et al., 2008). Four identified functions of slack include incentivizing participation (Cyert and March, 1963), serving as a conflict resolution resource, buffering environmental turbulence, and enabling novelty, experimentation and innovation incubation (Tan and Peng, 2003; Thompson, 1967). While organizations, especially those in the public and nonprofit sectors, are expected to operate at maximum efficiency (Lecy and Searing, 2015), this efficiency mindset may constrain a firm’s capacity to explore and exploit its operating environment (Voss et al., 2008) and adapt to changing conditions (Kraatz and Zajac, 2001).

Slack includes both time and resources. In terms of time, for example, a study of 182 employees in the manufacturing and service sector found that low time pressure was positively associated with employees’ knowledge application, whereas high time pressure led to withholding knowledge application as they focused on task completion instead (Rai and Prakash, 2016). In terms of resources, a study of 190 business unit managers in Belgium found that budgetary slack was associated with innovation and the adoption of longer time horizons. Lack of budgetary slack resulted in tighter resource control and employing a short-term time horizon (Van der Stede, 2000). However, too much surplus also puts a firm at risk. A study of 467 takeover bids for large firms in the USA found that higher cash flow increased their takeover risk (Davis and Stout, 1992). Two studies by Tan and Peng (2003) found a curvilinear relationship between performance and slack, suggesting that there exists an optimal range for slack, beyond which slack can instead hurt performance. Similarly, Lecuona and Reitzig (2014) found that slack human resources became valuable when firms faced increasing competitive pressure, and became less important in routine operating conditions marked by substantial standardization. A study of 102 public and private hospitals in the United Arab Emirates found that extensive strategic planning mediates the relationship between organizational performance and slack (Fadol et al., 2015).

As described above, diversity, meaning making and slack promote absorptive capacity in both potential and realized forms. The potential form includes acquisition and assimilation of new external knowledge. Realized forms include the capacity to transform and exploit (Zahra and George, 2002). A 2002 study of 462 general managers in a large, European financial service firm found that coordination capabilities (e.g. cross-functional interfaces, job rotation and participation in decision making) were antecedents to the development of potential absorptive capacity in their business units. Socialization capabilities (e.g. creating linkages between employees, encouraging newcomers to interpret information and respond within cultural norms) were found to be antecedents of realized absorptive capacity. Formalization (codification of rules and procedures) promoted transformation and exploitation of new external knowledge through recombination. In contrast, routinization (organizing tasks so they require little attention) negatively affected potential absorptive capacity, possibly because it separated knowledge and constrained joint learning (Jansen et al., 2005).
Because absorptive capacity exhibits path dependence, an underinvestment in absorptive capacity today may seriously limit future options and an organization’s future development (Cohen and Levinthal, 1990; Todorova and Durisin, 2007). Therefore, leadership and management decisions must consider not just current outcomes, but also how today’s decisions might impact future environmental fit and value creation potential (Van den Bosch et al., 1999). Leaders can enhance their organization’s absorptive capacity by promoting diversity in hiring and stakeholder engagement practices. Similarly, building in opportunities for meaning making in meetings and through other socialization processes can help people become more comfortable with ambiguity and recognize power differentials that affect knowledge acquisition, assimilation and transformation (Todorova and Durisin, 2007).

Adaptive capacity

No amount of sophistication is going to allay the fact that all your knowledge is about the past and all your decisions are about the future (Ian E. Wilson).

Adaptive capacity loosely refers to the ability of leaders to change to become more fit with the environment in which they operate, including but not limited to modifying existing procedures, adjusting to new circumstances, and updating knowledge and skills to meet new situational demands. In these VUCA times, adaptive capacity is critical at multiple levels of organization. Organizational structures are ever more ambiguous and dynamic. Employees not only belong to multiple teams and report to multiple leaders, but they also represent a high degree of diversity in terms of demographic and cultural backgrounds, abilities, working styles and preferences – all of which leaders need to take into accounts to be effective. To keep up with these constant changes means leaders need to continually learn, change and keep a flexible mindset.

At first glance, this proposition appears to be obvious. The natural question that follows is: if it is common sense that adaptive capacity is important, why are so many leaders lacking this skill? Two of the most important answers to this question are cultural – the culture of the USA does not perceive leaders showing change or inconsistency in a positive light – and psychological – leaders do not seek feedback as frequently as they should.

US-based research continues to dominate the leadership literature. Implicit within that scholarship is the American cultural assumption that doing and telling are more important than relating and asking (Schein, 2013). Task accomplishment is the rubric against which performance is measured, the key to career advancement, and the gold medal of success. In such a culture, it is no surprise that leaders have been referred to by both academics and the popular press as idols, heroes, saviors, warriors, magicians, and omnipotent and omniscient demi-gods (Morris et al., 2005). These strong, heroic images presume that leaders are almighty, righteous, know all the answers and do what is best to save the company or the community they are leading.

Subsequently, these implicit cultural norms create expectations for leaders’ behaviors that, if fulfilled, would result in more positive ratings of their leadership (Epitropaki and Martin, 2005). As a result, to maintain their status in organizations, leaders need to prove themselves capable (Huising, 2014) by asserting their experience, knowledge and confidence (Bonner and Bolinger, 2013). They also must be consistent in what they say and do, because inconsistency is perceived as incompetent or irrational (Mercier, 2011). All of these cultural and social pressures force leaders to create professional images that are all-knowing, confident and impervious to mistake or changes (Yanow, 2009). As a consequence of trying to protect their status and credibility, many leaders become reluctant to seek feedback or knowledge from others.

However, a major cause of leadership derailment is the very lack of continual feedback (Ashford et al., 2003; Goleman et al., 2013). Previous research shows that many organizational
leaders do not seek feedback and, if they receive it, often show dissent (Nemeth, 1997; Sprague and Ruud, 1988). Seeking feedback from others puts the seeker in a position of vulnerability and dependence; it is risky and not comfortable. Ashford and colleagues (2003) identified three reasons why people seek feedback: to get valuable information to help them achieve their goals; to defend, protect and enhance their ego; and to maintain and enhance self-image. They speculated that leaders’ limited feedback-seeking behaviors would tend to fall into the latter two categories, which often manifested as impression management. Consequently, many leaders fall victim to defensive mechanisms (Argyris, 1985), and together they create a culture of organizational silence (Morrison and Milliken, 2000). Their positions of power, coupled with the lack of feedback and information from below, reinforce their discounting of other people’s opinions (Yaniv and Kleinberger, 2000). This paradoxically boosts their self-confidence while simultaneously fostering inaccuracy in their decision making (See et al., 2011).

There are many accounts of organizational disasters that occurred because leaders made bad decisions while ignoring information from lower-level employees (Dotlich and Cairo, 2003). Take the recent rapid downfall of the tech giant Nokia, for example. Nokia lost the smartphone battle and sold its handset business to Microsoft for $7.2bn in September 2013, a fraction of its estimated worth at $250bn in the early 2000s. As Vuori and Huy (2016) revealed in their recent study, Nokia failed because their leaders had created a culture of silence and fear within the organization. Top management put pressure to keep up with innovations in the market on middle management in a threatening way, while middle management’s fear prevented them from reporting negative information they received from their engineers. As a result, top management became overly optimistic with Nokia’s technological capacities and made strategic decisions that turned out to be mistaken. In this case, the lack of adaptive capacity at different levels of leadership rendered a competent organization helpless in the face of market changes.

In order to develop adaptive capacity, it is crucial to reconstruct the image and role of leadership. In a time characterized by VUCA, it is impossible for anyone to know everything. The role of leaders, then, should shift away from providing directions and solutions. Instead, leaders should focus on providing support to, connection with and integration among the different interdependent parts of the organization. To do this, leaders must ask better questions and build better relationships. They must transcend the dominant existing cultural norms of doing and telling. As Ed Schein (2013) asserted, “in an increasingly complex, interdependent, and culturally diverse world, we cannot hope to understand and work with people from different occupational, professional, and national cultures if we do not know how to ask questions and build relationships that are based on mutual respect and the recognition that others know things that we may need to know in order to get a job done” (pp. 1-2). This shift requires leaders to develop a sense of humility. Here, humility is not underestimating oneself, but rather the courage and ability to acknowledge one’s limitations. Humble leaders appreciate learning and adaptation as required components of success in an increasingly unpredictable workplace (Kotter, 2007; Senge, 2006).

Some leaders may be concerned that showing humility may make them appear as lacking confidence or not being able to motivate others. However, recent research has shown that the opposite is true. Collins (2001) demonstrated that personal humility, along with strong professional will, distinguish great leaders from ordinary and good ones. Similarly, Owens and Hekman (2012) found that humble leaders produced positive organizational outcomes by providing their followers with good models of professional development, assurance and comfort about the feelings of uncertainty along their developmental journey. Owens et al. (2013) continued to show how humble leaders fostered learning-oriented teams and thereby increase employee engagement, job satisfaction and retention. Ou et al. (2014) presented evidence of humble CEOs’ ability to connect top and middle management by
creating an organizational climate that emphasized empowerment and collective goals, thus ultimately improving their work engagement, affective commitment and job performance.

Building adaptive capacity starts with developing what Schein calls the “here-and-now humility” – the embrace of one’s vulnerability and dependency upon other. This process takes several steps. First, leaders need to become self-aware of their own strengths and weaknesses (Owens et al., 2013), have a grounded view of self and others (Tangney, 2000) and view their contributions within the larger context of the whole organization or community (Kallasvuo, 2007). Well-documented techniques such as mindfulness, double-loop learning (Argyris, 2002) and reflection in action (Schön, 1984) would help with this first step.

Second, leaders need to appreciate the contribution of others and learn to empower and delegate (Ou et al., 2014; Owens and Hekman, 2012). Exemplary leadership involves fostering collaboration, strengthening others, showing appreciation for others’ accomplishments and creating a community spirit to celebrate one another’s wins (Kouzes and Posner, 2012). Third, leaders need to have a learning agenda for self-development. This may include being open to and aware of opportunities to learn from experience (DeRue and Wellman, 2009), genuinely seeking developmental feedback (Ashford et al., 2003) and engaging in humble inquiry, “the fine art of drawing someone out, of asking questions to which you do not already know the answer, of building a relationship based on curiosity and interest in the other person” (Schein, 2013, p. 2).

Generative capacity
While absorptive and adaptive capacities are important to tackle such problems, they alone are not enough. Organizations must also build generative capacity, the two-pronged ability to both innovate and evoke affordances that promote ongoing innovation (Avital and Te’eni, 2009). Complex problems are challenging because they are novel – they do not fit into pre-existing categories, analytical frameworks or technical-rational conceptual maps. Therefore, they often require the generation of entirely new solutions. A generative approach is well suited for highly uncertain environments where there is very little information available (Steinbruner, 2002). It transcends analysis and rationality out of necessity, because there are no relevant empirical data to analyze. Like an alchemist, it transmutes uncertainty into a resource, an opportunity to invent new frames, structures, processes and relationships.

How can organizations in an ever-changing VUCA world methodically approach goal attainment to promote generativity? Effectuation offers a model (Sarasvathy, 2001). This theory posits that rather than organizations positioning themselves to exploit existing situations, entrepreneurs effectuate (create) new opportunities, such as developing new markets that never previously existed. In contrast to traditional management approaches based on causation (e.g. positioning a firm to achieve a goal through control and implementation of a plan), effectuational decision making uses heuristics like experimentation, novelty seeking and risk taking measured by affordable loss (Chandler et al., 2011). It enables dynamism so the organization can remain closely coupled to its operating environment.

Effectuation also turns uncertainty into a resource by leveraging contingency (Sarasvathy, 2001). It does so by employing flexibility, openness, organic (vs mechanistic) organizational structure and a transformational leadership style (Read et al., 2009). Providing empirical support for the value of this approach, a study of 2,532 project managers found that those who operated in high-innovation contexts employed an effectuation approach (e.g. using heuristics and thought experiments). In contrast, those operating in low-innovation contexts used causal logic focused on evidence and control (Brettel et al., 2012). Similarly, a study on marketing decision making under uncertain...
conditions found that 27 experienced entrepreneurs employed effectuation logic, emphasizing the importance of co-creating markets with partners and stakeholders. In contrast, the 37 less experienced managers relied on traditional predictive techniques, such as planning to gain competitive advantage (Read et al., 2009).

While traditional strategic planning seeks to impose order through prescriptive action, this can result in detachment and misalignment from the operating environment in conditions of high uncertainty, as happened with in the Nokia example shared earlier. Developing generative capacity focuses on the creation of process structures to promote nonlinear epigenesis (Cicchetti and Rogosch, 1996), the capacity to achieve a preferred future through the development of multiple pathways to get there. This approach fosters organizational fitness by maintaining flexibility to accommodate changing conditions. This dynamic stability is maintained by focusing collective attention on the intangible and symbolic layers of reality (e.g. values, mission, patterns, processes, learning and relationships). This enables an organization to both adapt and sustain its identity over time. A generative approach also fosters interdependence. Whereas technical-rational management seeks to isolate variables and reduce analysis to individual components, process structures provide paths for feedback loops that accommodate recursive influences and reflexive causation, promoting information flow between internal and external boundaries at multiple scales (Todorova and Durisin, 2007).

Simon (1996) called this generative approach science before the fact, in contrast to traditional empiricism’s science after the fact. He argued that systematic and rigorous processes of knowledge creation can be employed to increase an organization’s capacity to anticipate, assess and create future potentials through the science of design. Importantly, he noted that design, because of its future orientation, requires very different methods of inquiry compared to empirical methods used to scientifically investigate the past. He argued that technical-rational cognition (positivism) works well for understanding past events and for managing situations with a high degree of information. In uncertain environments where there is little or no information, abduction, the logic of potentiality (Magnani, 2001) and practical reasoning (Donmoyer, 2009) are analytical methods that promote better fit. Tools of abduction include metaphor and visualization of information. As these generate new insights, ideas are captured not just in words but also through graphic and physical representations such as concept maps, affinity diagraming, storyboarding, sketching and model making (Pacione, 2010). Metaphors are also helpful to make novel and uncertain environments more understandable by juxtaposing them with known situations (Casakin, 2007).

Design can also serve as a future-oriented risk management function to decrease the chance of loss while expanding potential for future opportunities. Several industries employ design as a risk mitigation strategy. These include businesses that rely on innovation, e.g., the National Football League (Albergotti, 2012); exploration, e.g., oil and mineral companies (Borthwick, 1997) and High Reliability Organizations (Weick et al., 1999) such as the military (Leedom, 2001), health care organizations (Begun et al., 2003) and homeland security (US Department of Homeland Security, 2011).

Discussion
In natural systems, fitness is an organism’s ability to survive and reproduce (Kauffman, 1993). Organisms and species that survive over time are those that fit with their environment. These dynamics also apply to organizations (McKelvey, 1999). What can leaders do to develop organizational fitness, particularly in times of VUCA? The conceptual analysis above suggests the need for an adaptive approach to leadership and capacity development. For contexts that feature abundant information, routine tasks, homogeneity and agreement about goals and values, traditional management strategies (e.g. prediction,
control, efficiency, cost/benefit analysis) are effective. When operating in VUCA environments characterized by uncertainty, heterogeneity, instability and interdependencies, it is essential to develop a new mindset to develop absorptive, adaptive and generative capacity because these three capacities promote information intake, flow and processing. They also maintain fitness by fostering flexibility (nimbleness) and continuous coupling with the operating environment through co-evolution.

The conceptual analysis further suggests that both the organization and its employees must develop these capacities. In complex systems, an efficient way to obtain a macro outcome (organizational development) is by activating the micro-level inputs. Expanding information intake and processing capacity of employees can foster self-organization through relational ties to increase capacity at the organizational level too (Roberts et al., 2012). The development of absorptive, adaptive and generative capacity at both the micro and macro levels reflects another important quality of complex systems, self-similarity (patterns that repeat across multiple scales). Figure 1 illustrates this model.

Importantly, the model includes affective, cognitive and qualitative components that facilitate the process of information flow. It also illuminates neglected aspects sometimes missing from the capacity-building literature: diversity, meaning making and slack (absorptive capacity); openness to change, humility and feedback (adaptive capacity); and design, abduction and effectuation (generative capacity).

Developing a relational approach to organizing is fundamental to this model. At its heart, organizational viability is rooted in the dynamic interplay between internal and external relationships and their interdependence across time and space. Internally, macro-level effects depend upon the emergence of micro-level actions and interactions. Capacity to produce those micro-level effects depends on policies, practices, organizational structure and leadership at the macro level. Externally, capacity depends on relational embeddedness and

![Figure 1. Absorptive, adaptive, and generative leadership capacity in a complex system (VUCA environment)](image-url)
interface with people and other organizations in the operating environment. For example, a study of 218 projects in German mechanical and plant engineering industries captures this dynamic. It found that “absorptive capacity emerges as an unintended consequence from organizational boundary spanners' external and internal relational embeddedness and their relational empowerment” (Ebers and Maurer, 2014, p. 318).

Shared leadership and genuine concern for employees fosters a process of mutual influence that further supports knowledge creation (Rai and Prakash, 2012). Rather than relying solely on hierarchical organizing, in a VUCA context leaders employ organismic (adhocratic, relational) rather than mechanistic (bureaucratic, compartmental) structures and processes (Johnson and Johnson, 1989). Organic organizational structures promote broader interaction among employees across hierarchical levels, often through face-to-face communications (Ramezan, 2011) that occurs more quickly and frequently (Nahm et al., 2003). For example, a study of 251 firms with high competence in human resource management found that the degree of organic organizational structure had a positive relationship with perceptions of performance, mediated by learning capability of the organization (Mallén et al., 2015).

**Implications for practice**

Collectively, absorptive, adaptive and generative capacities reflect key competencies that leaders and organizations need to thrive in VUCA environments. Building on the insights above, there is much that leaders can do to develop these three capacities within their organizations. In so doing, it will be important to think about and remain mindful of time horizons and cascade effects. This is because efficiency plays out differently under dynamic conditions (Ghoshal and Moran, 1996). Rather than looking to simply maximize financial returns today, the strategic questions become: what steps can we take to improve our situation now (e.g. developing realized capacity) that will simultaneously increase tomorrow’s options (potential capacity)? What interventions at one level will also generate returns at other levels? Below are examples of such actions for implementation at the individual, group and organizational levels.

At the individual level, one of the most effective interventions is to develop employee engagement. Worker engagement is associated with increased absorptive, adaptive and generative capacity (Daghfous, 2004; Macey and Schneider, 2008; Whitney and Cooperrider, 2011). Engagement means that workers bring their full selves (cognitive, emotional and physical energy) to tasks (Kahn, 1990). A meta-analysis of 90 studies covering more than 25,000 employees found a strong correlation between employee engagement and work outcomes across multiple levels of analysis (Christian et al., 2011). In the USA, only 25 percent of employees report being actively engaged, while 75 percent are neutral or actively disengaged (Fleming et al., 2005). Evidence-based practices that increase engagement are supportive coaching and mentoring (e.g. regular developmentally focused performance reviews, goal setting and feedback), participation in decision making, and recognizing employee accomplishments (Serrano and Reichard, 2011).

Developing employees’ personal resources (e.g. knowledge, relationships and psychological capital) is also associated with increased engagement (Serrano and Reichard, 2011). Psychological capital – having a sense of optimism, hope, resilience and agency – can be developed intentionally (Luthans et al., 2007) through skills training to increase a worker’s sense of mastery. It is also developed by leaders encouraging and expressing belief in their employees (Eden et al., 2000). Expanding employees’ openness to cognitive diversity (e.g. believing that others should be allowed to freely express differing opinions, recognizing that divergent perspectives have value) is also effective (Anderson and West, 1998). For example, openness to cognitive diversity is associated with enhanced knowledge creation capacity. A study of 98 workplace teams found that such openness led
to more robust discussion, debate and improved decision-making processes that facilitated knowledge creation (Mitchell et al., 2009). Developing employees’ personal resources will enhance their absorptive, adaptive and generative capacities.

At the group level, building a supportive work community (Maslach and Leiter, 1997) can increase workers’ sense of psychological safety and sharing of their authentic selves (Kahn, 1990; Serrano and Reichard, 2011). To develop community, leaders must build a trustworthy culture (Macey et al., 2009) and promote social cohesion (Shirom, 2006). Embracing and modeling relationally oriented behaviors such as open communication, enthusiastic collaboration and trustworthiness are effective ways for leaders to build social capital (cohesion) in firms (Carmeli et al., 2009). Investment in these relational resources develops work groups’ absorptive, adaptive and generative capacities and, in turn, generates increasing returns because engaging one employee tends to have a cascade effect among work groups (Bakker and Xanthopoulou, 2009).

At the organizational level, developing a learning culture is perhaps the most effective way to create openness and flexibility (Argyris, 2002; Argyris and Schon, 1978; Senge, 2006). Learning promotes first a change in mindset and then a change in behavior. Firms that invest time and resources solely in exploitation may enjoy short-term gains, but risk long-term self-destruction by ignoring learning, development and exploration (March, 1991). To develop a continuous orientation to learning, leaders and employees should co-create a learning agenda to frame developmental goals for the organization and its members. Processes such as appreciative inquiry can blend productivity with learning by investigating organizational problems through this action research approach (Argyris and Schon, 1978; Cooperrider and Srivastva, 1987). An appreciative inquiry approach invites reflection, mindfulness and humble inquiry. Further, it helps organizations check their assumptions, develop capacity to see their blind spots, and generate new ways of discovering and creating alternatives through double-loop learning (Argyris, 2002). It can also help firms surface and work through conflict, turning it from a problem into a resource. While organizations often try to avoid or minimize conflict, leaders can reframe disagreements as gifts of energy (Erwin and Pryzdia, personal communication, March 2017). Practices such as dialogue, authentic listening and conflict mediation can help organizations leverage and rechannel this energy to align efforts toward shared goal attainment.

Because organizational culture is a resource that can be endogenously created, it is thus within reach of every organization that wants to succeed in volatile, uncertain environments. This requires reconfiguring its cultural ethos from one that values and rewards only task and performance, to one that recognizes the important value creation potential of slack to accommodate learning, development and the emergence of opportunities that cannot yet be imagined. Structures and processes must be able to accommodate and promote emergence through self-organization rather than imposing control. Diversification of human capital, teams, board of directors and executive leadership will further expand the cognitive and information processing capacity of firms.

**Concluding thoughts**

The model outlined here offers guideposts to help leaders and organizations navigate more effectively through VUCA environments. By developing three fundamental capacities (absorptive, adaptive and generative), leaders can cultivate organizations capable of continuous synchronization with their fitness landscapes. The model extends prior scholarship by addressing gaps in the literature, particularly the essential role that diversity, slack, learning, humility, reflection in action and abductive logic play in developing capacity. By providing the underlying rationale for the proposed interventions (e.g. Ashby’s law of requisite variety), the paper reorients busy leaders’ mental models from traditional positivistic approaches (e.g. prediction, control and certainty) to show why capacity-building time investments are worth implementing.
Exploring the notion of evolvability (Kernbach et al., 2009; Wagner, 2008; Wagner and Altenberg, 1996) is a promising path to further develop this model. While biological evolution can be explained through mutation, recombination and selection processes, research on complex systems and evolutionary computing suggests that adaptation also requires evolvability, the ability to incorporate and leverage random variations to produce improvement. Computational science (e.g. agent-based modeling) is a promising methodology to explore this line of inquiry since it accommodates randomness (Macy and Willer, 2002; Railsback and Grimm, 2012; Squazzoni, 2010; Wilensky and Rand, 2015). Programming would also need to include affective and relational parameters. As it has been shown in this paper, a relational orientation and willingness to embrace uncertainty are fundamental to success and sustainability in VUCA contexts. The key to breaking free from Plato’s cave is to look beyond a technical-rational approach to organizational science, instead recognizing and developing intangible layers of reality (e.g. processes, knowledge and relationships) through metacognition and humility. Leaders are the key to catalyzing this shift.

References


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Leading change through your creative class
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Abstract
Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to share how a professional service firm transposed Richard Florida’s “Creative Class” concept from the urban environment into a corporate one for the purpose of organisational change. The validity of Florida’s concept is not here reviewed; rather, the paper is a case study on how his theory – that talent, technology and tolerance compose the high-value triptych driving a city’s growth and attractiveness – can be appropriated by HR to trigger profound changes in corporate governance and culture.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper provides a return on experience of a project that was implemented at Mazars, an international mid-cap of 20,000 people in 86 countries, over the course of one year. Approximately, 50 individuals participated in the initiative, lead by the firm’s HR leadership team, which used an under the radar approach based on a revamped version of Owen’s Open Space Technology. From an academic perspective, the approach is inspired by Argyris’ action science, and more specifically a derivation of the “double loop learning” where the initial intent of the research might be modified by intermediary findings.

Findings – The paper offers a model for identifying the members of the “creative class” in a corporate environment and a tested approach for integrating the “creative class” into the exclusive and institutional exercise of setting strategy. The cumulative effect of this “unofficial” operation is the creation of unique thought leadership and projects, some of which have now been officially adopted in the four-year strategic plan and institutionalized in the new governance system, results difficult to achieve through conventional approaches.

Research limitations/implications – The case study, which is still in progress, has been implemented in a non-conventional organisation in a very specific industry.

Originality/value – To the authors’ knowledge, this is the first application of Richard Florida’s urban renewal theory in the corporate environment. This is an example of innovative HR management responding quickly and effectively to the digital, disrupted business landscape. It is designed in the modern managerial spirit of test-and-learn, structured as an agile initiative in an open-source world. It provides a prototype to be replicated and tested in other environments.

Keywords Organizational design, Talent management, Creative class, Organizational transformation, HR innovation, Unconference

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction
From a pure academic point of view, the paper you are going to read is not valid; it tells how we are in the middle of distorting, with no proven success so far, a highly disputed theory to implement it in a challenging, non-conventional organisation in an industry which cannot be easily transposed to any other[1]. And, to make the fraud complete, to keep it as secret as possible.

Here is the concept and how we used it to trigger profound changes in our organisation. In 2002, Richard Florida, a professor in urban studies, published a best-seller, “The Rise of the Creative Class” (Florida, 2002). The criticism that the book provoked was commensurate to its success. The book mixed an old concept – the mechanism of gentrification in fast-developing cities – with a new twist, focussed on the creative people at the heart of the process, together forming a “creative class”, composed of technologists, artists and other “high bohemians”. In Florida’s claim, which is considered highly empirical even by critics (Glaeser and Saiz, 2004), the growth potential of modern cities is correlated to their ability to attract and capture a significant part of this creative class. Thus, the gentrified neighbourhoods are not an anecdotal fringe element in a city, but rather they impact the fundamental dynamics of the place, from capital flows to business creation and growth.
In order to attract and retain the creative class, cities must combine three attributes: favour
talent, offer superior technology, in a tolerant environment (Florida, 2005a).

Our profession – audit and advisory – is among the most likely to be disrupted and
robotised in the coming years (Frey and Osborne, 2013). The leaders in our profession are
massively investing in order to transform themselves from audit and accounting giants to
next-generation digital beacons. This is a move that second-tier competitors like us cannot
afford, as it would require sacrificing the proven growth models of traditional business for a
“bet-the-farm” investment on the unknown. And yet, status quo is not an option. During our
own strategic review last year, we realised that we faced a classical bias in our process:
when it comes to designing the future, the institutional class, not the creative class, is in the
driver’s seat. But what does “creative class” mean in an organisation?

There are actually very few commonalities between the way we use Florida’s concept and
what Florida initially described; in Florida’s view, the creative class is a social subgroup covering
three distinctive categories of citizens (Florida, 2002). The first category includes what he calls
the super creative core, in other words people who directly use their creativity for a living (artists,
architects, designers, etc.). The second category includes those who are in knowledge-intensive
professions and thus leverage a specific knowledge to resolve specific problems, like doctors,
professors or still consultants. The third category – the bohemians – is less relevant here. In
other words, Florida considers that the creative class is a social class determined by the nature of
their professional occupation and that it is composed of professional creative and creative
professionals. To pay fair tribute to Florida’s initial taxonomy, the term “high bohemians”
is associated with this group because of their lifestyle, no matter their professional occupation.

In our case, we operate in a knowledge-intensive industry, audit and advisory, or more
broadly professional service firms, and therefore Florida would de facto include our entire
staff in the second category of his “creative class”, specifically the subset of creative
professionals. Professional service firms are defined by three objective criteria
(Von Nordenflycht, 2010): they are high in knowledge, low in capital and regulated.
However, every professional is by no means creative. Whereas Florida distinguishes the
creative class from society at large, to apply his theory in the microcosm of Mazars, we must
distinguish our creative professionals from our professionals at large who, as a population,
are highly knowledgeable, but highly risk-averse (DeLong et al., 2007). This combination
works well in the regulated environment, where change is generally slow and incremental,
when possible (Helleiner et al., 2010). The result is that success in PSFs, up to present, has
not been driven by innovation and change, but performance and execution. In 2016, our
challenge was to design the strategic direction of Mazars in the tech-enabled, VUCA world;
we knew that we would need the most creative people in our organisation for the job, and
our initial assumption was that these people would not necessarily be the “institutional”
class, in other words, those who had succeeded to get to the top, and who by rank and
status, are entitled to think and decide upon our future.

The sociological validity of Florida’s concept is not at stake here, nor is its acceptance in
urban studies. What we want to discuss is whether applying the concept of creative class to
the sphere of organisational design and management science seems relevant or not. The
scientific work will then remain to be done on a larger scale, which could, in time, prove to be
an original academic angle.

Even if our angle is about Florida’s theory, our approach is guided by Argyris’ action
science theory in particular with respect to two dimensions: “individual learning is a
necessary but insufficient condition for organisational learning” and “one must treat theory-in-use
as both a psychological certainty and an intellectual hypothesis” (Argyris and Schon, 1974). In particular, our work seeks to bring to forefront our organisation’s theories-in-use,
thoughts practiced by the creative class, rather than the theories espoused, those of the
institutional class, in order to influence the course of our leadership action.
Talent, technology and tolerance
Florida considers that the attractive environment for the creative class is a mix between three elements: talent, technology and tolerance, the combination of which enables cities to attract the creative class. At Mazars, the three elements are present to various degrees across the organisation, but in major flux. Indeed, all three represent high-stakes issues that will impact our long-term success.

Regarding talent, attracting high-end graduates is particularly competitive in the audit and advisory profession because of its peculiar business model. Since the beginning of the 1980’s, audit firms have implemented, on a massive scale, an up-or-out system as a key mechanism to fight the wage-drift effect – upward pressure on payroll due to seniority or skill – and keep their cost of technical staff under control. Despite the fact that the industry leader, Arthur Andersen, was founded on this principle in the first half of the twentieth century, the industry as a whole only adopted the practice once the audit market went through a spectacular concentration, which corresponded to slower organic growth, and ultimately forced firms to curb the cost of staff to preserve the financial surplus, i.e. the partners’ compensation. This is only achieved through a strict Noria effect, with approximately 20 per cent attrition of staff each year.

This up-or-out talent management model, also known as the Cravath system, ensures that the best performers rise to the top. There are basically two conditions to make the up-or-out system work: first, leaving the firm must not be a drama, instead it should be normative and even encouraged. Second, to facilitate a drama-free exit, the firm itself must become a talent factory, renowned amongst candidates and companies for identifying and developing top talents. The focus of any firm is therefore high employability rather than systematic retention. This carefully crafted employer branding and value proposition has been implemented by the leading players in the industry – called the Big4 – who steadily rank among the top 10 preferred employers for fresh business school graduates, and thus help the wider audit and advisory profession to be attractive to sophisticated talents.

Enter the second element: technology. The profession is now facing new challenges in their HR strategies. Three technological game changers – big data, block-chain technology and artificial intelligence – are disrupting, at a rather quick pace, decades of well-established professional processes and business models (Mayer-Schnberger and Cukier, 2013). Jobs are changing, skills are shifting and even the cognitive attributes of professionals are evolving. To meet the changing market needs requires massive upskilling and reskilling of existing staff, but also recruiting new profiles. Recruiting data scientists with an employer value proposition designed for auditors is not an option.

And here comes the third element of Florida’s triptych: tolerance for diversity in a professional services environment is traditionally low. Conformity rather than diversity has been one of the cornerstones of the audit and advisory profession so far. In a highly regulated environment, compliance to standard processes has long been a hallmark for performance. Indeed, the resulting cultural homogeneity particularly in the management team, as Blau’s theory of heterogeneity suggested (1977), enabling groups to think, speak and act similarly was even embedded in Arthur Andersen’s firm philosophy, “to act as one firm, to speak with one voice” (Moore and Crampton, 2001). As a result, historically our HR systems are neither tolerant, nor integrative by design. Of course, now large international organisations like ours have explicit diversity policies, but these are pushed forward to rebalance negative effects of implicit discriminatory biases, which have reduced the variety of staff profiles on many dimensions, from educational diversity to gender diversity to cognitive diversity. More than ever, the value-in-diversity theory, where diverse perspectives and talents foster a wider range of creative decision alternatives and enable both quicker and better decision-making, rings valid (Cox, 1994; McLeod et al., 1996; Richard et al., 2004).

This is why, one year ago and on the eve of redesigning our strategy, our business models, and our governance bodies, we faced three interconnected challenges: revamping
our employer value proposition to an enlarged and diversified pool of talent on an increasingly competitive market, shifting our work processes and mindsets to permit a still-fuzzy-yet-palpable digital disruption of our core conventional offers and opening our army-like organisations to greater diversity.

To set the strategic path of an organisation, there are three options: (a) ask those who are entitled to think and decide by status, those who we would call our institutional class; (b) ask those who are obviously more connected to the future, what we would call our creative class; (c) combine the two. No surprise, we opted for (a).

Crozier and Friedberg (Crozier and Friedberg, 1980) describe the mechanism at work: in organisations, power lies with actors who control zones of uncertainty. While this mechanism links power to leadership in corporate environments, in a partnership, the most common form of organisation in professional service firms, the leadership and strategic direction of the firm does not equate to power. Leadership itself remains a zone of uncertainty that is very difficult to control for three main reasons: first, executives are elected for short-term mandates and subject to re-election, which often favour short-term and/or easy decisions over long-term interests; second, the breadth of strategic choices is strongly limited due to the high level of concentration in the profession; and third, leadership typically remains a side, amateurish activity for professionals whose credibility stems from their client work (DeLong et al., 2007). In short, disruptive options in a partnership are very tricky not only to implement, but even to formulate in an acceptable manner.

To put it another way, a decision that a corporate leader could impose – for example, officially giving the strategic review to creative, diverse people who could come up with more innovative solutions – has strictly no chance of happening in a partnership. Therefore, a parameter has to be removed or altered to empower the creative class in organisation like ours, and thus the parameter is: “officially”.

Effectively empowering the creative class

Discern your creative class

The biggest mistake is to assimilate creative with young. In our firm, as well as in the wider profession, the average age is by and large 30. We are lucky enough to recruit mostly graduates from top universities and schools, and we select them for their superior skepticism and analytical skills. Age is definitely not the appropriate parameter to spot the most creative people in our organisation.

Through experience, we have identified three characteristics among our most creative people. First, they are “snowball learners”, i.e. they demonstrate a superior appetite and ability to learn fast, and immediately use their new knowledge combined with previously accumulated knowledge stock. Second, they focus on creative implementation over creative design: they prefer to iterate quickly rather than over-engineer the concept. Last, they are what Meredith Belbin called “resource investigators”, which means that they spend a significant amount of time finding external resources and competencies to serve internal purposes (Belbin, 1981).

For our experiment, we deliberately used only one comprehensive indicator to identify our creative class. We selected the people with a reputation for implementing (not simply generating) new ideas in the firm. This criterion ticks all three boxes: capacity to entertain a new idea (snowball learner), put it into action (creative implementation), with a network sufficiently robust that other people know about it (resource investigator). In future, there can certainly be other mechanisms to measure these three characteristics in people – assessment centres, 360° people reviews, psychometric testing, or a combination of the above – however, the risk in our case was that the identification process would take longer than the project itself. One caveat to this identification model is that it only works if at least one person from the HR team knows well and interacts regularly with operational staff. If the HRs are not themselves
connected, then this identification system will not work. Ideally, some creative class member should be found or recruited within the HR team. The identification process must remain soft and open, based on the principle that “like begets like”.

The results of this approach were to identify exactly where are these people. Actually, everywhere some of them are still in the infant stages of their career and in the lower ranks of the organisation. Others are in the institutional class. While still others are outside of our organisation, but are connected to it (see Figure 1).

Fly under the radar
When it comes to designing a strategic review in a professional service firm, there is little chance for it to be a success if the institutional class is left on the wayside. It is strongly recommended to send signs of belonging and inclusion to your core team of leaders, who ultimately need to appropriate and drive the strategy. Giving the floor openly to the creative class without frustrating the institutional stakeholders is clearly a challenge. At the same time, carving out a small space for the minority voice of the creative class risks stifling the message entirely. This is why we went to option (a) and asked our institutional class to conduct our strategic review, and set out to embark our creative class in another way. The concept of “ungroup” is the most appropriate way to implement this strategy.

The digital economy has given new energy to old fads. TED conferences, invented in the early 1980’s, are today familiar and a common reference. Similarly, Harrison Owen observed that the most interesting and productive parts in seminars and conferences were actually the breaks, thus creating that his “Open Space Technology”, a way to redesign large conferences by deconstructing the traditional formal processes and principles of conventional meetings. The revamped approach to OST is called, in the Silicon Valley provocative style, the “unconference”, a non-conference that is driven by participants, not by speakers.

Official results of an unofficial operation – why organisations are desperate resilent
How did we use it? At the global HR level, we identified our pool of creative professionals internally using the above criteria – snowball learners, creative implementers, resource investigators. We then selected 10 top-notch global events, which would be inspiring for this creative class and would feature speakers and guests that are already, or should be, part of our external creative class. To each event, we sent a panel of people without informing them that they were actually part of the same global programme.

In Richard Florida’s theory, the magic of urban renewal happens when a concentration of bohemians comes together, inspiring each other and building on each other, ultimately becoming a force for the entire city to attract more talent, business and capital. The key is concentration. Without needing to disclose the ungroup members explicitly, we wanted to
weave links between our ungroup of corporate bohemians. Attending these global events together, in small groups, was the first step to moving our creative class from individuals scattered across a global organisation to creating a virtual neighbourhood, and by doing so, essentially magnifying their concentration.

The rules of a game were simple: we did not ask for any deliverable, but invited them to attend with the sole instruction to learn. If, in addition, they learned about something that could be implemented in the firm in one way or another, then they should write a memo on it. Giving this instruction to a natural networker, curious to learn and eager to implement, is an implicit invitation not only to think, but moreover to prototype.

Altogether, more than 50 talents participated in this initial ungroup; with the following main operational results thus far.

The unusual format unleashed participants from concerns about their own personal status, or whether their ideas were taboo or politically inadvisable, and thus the first contribution of the creative class was the creation of a significant body of new ideas and thought leadership.

These ideas made impact in two distinct ways. First, the creatives who generated the ideas, also started to prototype, partner and spread. They have not waited for macro-level strategic change, instead some have taken initiative to test these ideas within their own scope immediately – their own team, own assignments in real-time. Examples of experiments that were launched consequently include a data-mining pilot project for consumer banks, a block-chain based tracking system for signing partners of listed clients, an AI partnership with IBM Watson.

At the same time that the creatives were prototyping new ways of working, the second impact of these ideas came due to the fact that they were being fed, anonymously by the Global HR team, into the Group Executive Board (GEB).

The GEB, based on the quality of the ideas that were being shared, made an unprecedented decision. Instead of selecting a small number of the Institutional Class to write the Strategic Review, they opted to include a wide array of people and not just partners, in the process. Altogether, the GEB selected 93 people from 21 countries to participate in the brainstorming and drafting of the Strategic Manifesto.

The participants represented a far more diverse tranche of the partnership in many respects:

- Age: thanks to the fact that many young partners, who would normally have been excluded from the exercise due to their lack of seniority, were nominated to join the the Strategic Review, the average age of the group was 43 vs 49, the average age of partners world-wide.
- Gender: 20 per cent of the group were women vs the partner average of 15 per cent at the time.
- Service line: whereas the predominant service line at Mazars is audit, only 42 per cent of the group were audit partners, indicating that non-audit services and support functions had significantly more voice.

The Strategic Manifesto resulting from the merging of diverse points of view of the participants, both creative and institutional, is bold and transformative on multiple levels. Though the details of the strategy cannot be disclosed, the tone is definitively forward-looking, tech-savvy and ready for change. It was approved by the GEB and the Global partnership in December 2016.

What is perhaps even more remarkable is that while the diverse group responsible for writing the Manifesto was ephemeral, the Strategic Manifesto called for the institutionalisation of a new group of people, the “Group Leadership Team”, responsible for realizing the manifesto and nominated by the GEB.
The 48-member Group Leadership Team is, by the numbers and personalities, an eclectic group, composed as follows:

- 29 per cent women;
- 15 per cent non-partners; and
- 43 per cent audit.

So herein is the virtuous circle we have seen in action: the creative ideas, conceived unofficially and implemented under the radar, eventually turn into concrete, successful initiatives. As a consequence, the creatives behind them start to get official recognition and effectively populate the executive talent pool. In the year since we started our journey, quite a few members of the creative class, who were previously completely unknown entities, have now joined the ranks of the institutional class, including our executive leadership.

However, our experience with the creative class also shows some empirical limitations.

First, in terms of whether this strategy could be as effective in another context has yet to be explored, the context of a partnership being quite different from a traditional corporate structure. Partnerships appear as aristocratic structures with more or less subtle caste discriminations, but altogether they offer a democratic functioning within a group of peers, privilege intelligence over seniority and number more decision-makers than any other type of corporate organisation.

Second, while the nomination of a diversified leadership team is a milestone, the real impact and long-term functioning of the newly institutionalized “creatives” remains to be consolidated. This is what Kurt Lewin called “the refreezing phase” in his tripartite “unfreeze, change, refreeze”. Will the “theories-in-practice” become the firm’s “theories espoused”, as their ideas and ways of working are formally adopted across the organisation, or to the contrary, will they lose momentum as they are institutionalised and scaled?

Third, as diversity increases in the leadership group but remains partial, we are at risk of facing the challenges associated with moderately heterogenous groups: in-group/out-group dynamics (Blau, 1977; Smith et al., 1994) and increased communication problems and relationship conflicts (Earley and Mosakowski, 2000). Whereas before, the creative class was working under the radar, on fringe projects within their own teams and scope, they had maximum freedom to experiment and minimum communication. Knowing how to manage the group dynamics and communication was not a necessary skillset. Now that they sit at the leadership team, with an executive attention on their projects, they have the obligation to communicate, with a steep learning curve. But they must do it well or risk inversing else the dynamic with maximum communication and minimum freedom to experiment.

The final limitation that we have identified is more crucial and generic: creative attributes are sought after in the learning phase, but tend to be rapidly overwhelmed by organisational attributes when it comes to operationalizing ideas. In other words, creativity rapidly dissolves in organisations. The creative class is expected to become the “operative class” and deliver measurable results at scale, which is a shift that very few people prove capable of making beyond setting vague objectives. This is most probably where Florida’s theory is both a blessing and a curse; gentrification is the “end” of the creative class, meaning its finality as well as its negation. This is why leading change through your creative class is not a one-shot action but a demanding, permanent process of renewal; a true culture.

Note
1. Both authors combine a career as executives with an academic research activity at the research department of Université Paris II – Panthéon Assas (LARGEPA). Their research work as well as their practice is particularly influenced by two sets of theories: organisational learning (Argyris, Senge, Kofman) and resource-based view (Barney, Wernerfelt, Prahalad & Hamel).
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The role of storytelling in navigating through the storm of change

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to evaluate the perception of the role of storytelling in organizational change in this study involving eight principals and administrators in three of Central Florida’s counties. The study concerns the change from the “No Child Left Behind” (NCLB) legislation to the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA, December 10, 2015). Even though the ESSA includes major changes from the NCLB legislation, schools that consistently perform below standard continue to face having to turn over operations to a charter or outside entity (Florida Department of Education, 2018).

Design/methodology/approach – This study engaged the phenomenological research design of qualitative methodology in this small case study. Eight principals and/or administrators employed in Orange, Seminole and Volusia County public schools participated in this study. SurveyMonkeyTM, an online survey tool, was the instrument used to collect the data.

Findings – Two themes emerged from the perceptions of the participants. They expressed storytelling is effective in engaging the school’s culture and strengthening commitment to the change. They also expressed that even though storytelling is recommended as a tool to use in organizational change, it is only one of the necessary elements.

Practical implications – Like in other industries where dynamic changes arise from external factors, ESSA, the new standardized assessment, under-performing students and insufficient financial and academic resources have created the perfect storm for principals and administrators to navigate if their schools are to survive. Storytelling can be a helpful part of the change management toolkit.

Originality/value – In this case study, storytelling has proven to be an effective measure for principals and administrators to include as one of their change tools to engage in productive communication as they tackle the many negative side effects of the new act.

Keywords Organizational culture, Organizational learning, Education, Storytelling, Communication, Organizational change

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Most organizations undertake planned change efforts annually and major change once every five years (Kotter and Schlesinger, 2008). Competition, laws, the environment and technological advances often drive planned change (Kotter and Schlesinger, 2008). Human resource departments (HRD) are tasked with implementing strategies that improve individual, team and organizational performance prior to, during and after change (Swanson and Holton, 2009). Therefore, successful organizations are constantly assessing the need to change in their efforts to remain relevant in their industries and ahead of their competition.

However, the most common discussions and dialogues regarding change are usually associated with its failures rather than with its successes. Bouckenooghe et al. (2009) indicated failure to obtain readiness for change will result in “negative re-actions such as sabotage, absenteeism, and output restriction” (p. 561). Buchanan et al. (2005) explained the failure to successfully integrate context, clarity, direction and competition with its interconnectivity of systems and procedures results in unsustainable change. Reiss (2009) attributed the failure of change to the methods used in the process, while Rosenberg and Mosca (2011) and Hacker and Washington (2004) identified improper implementation as the cause of organizational change failures.

Crossan (2003) identified the forces driving resistance to change as the primary factor in the failure of planned change efforts. Organizational culture, defensive routines, lack of trust,
opposing views and low tolerance for change have all been identified as reasons for resistance (Schein, 1999; Argyris and Schon, 1996; Kotter and Schlesinger, 2008). Daft and Huber (1986) concluded that the failure of many organizational efforts occurred because “They did not listen. They did not see. They did not react. These organizations failed to acquire accurate information about environmental events or did not interpret it correctly. They did not learn” (p. 2).

Lewin (1997) indicated organizational learning is a result of improvements in behaviors within the organizational culture, motivators of group decisions, group ideology and organizational capabilities. Lewin (1951) also identified the same four areas as the primary reasons for organizational failures due to their interconnectedness to organizational values, beliefs, group standards and relationships that may be in direct conflict to the desired change. Liu (2009) and Schimmel and Muntslag (2009) suggested that the integration of organizational learning strategies into organizational change efforts will increase the probability of a successful implementation.

Reissner (2005) explained that through stories learning is enhanced. Both Beech and Johnson (2005) and Reissner (2005) indicated engaging in storytelling within the organizational culture will enhance understanding and establish clarity. April (1999) and Kahan (2006) explained that during times of change, the emotional connections engrained within stories will engender buy-in. Education is not much different than corporations in many aspects (Stollar et al., 2006). Schools battles with external forces that demand change (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016). Individuals in education also search for understanding and clarity during times of critical change. Additionally, their lack of readiness has an adverse effect on the needed change. It also finds itself facing more failure than success in organizational change efforts (Deal and Peterson, 2016).

In 2002, the US Department of Education implemented the No Child Left Behind legislation (NCLB) (McQuillan and Salomon-Fernandez, 2008). Unfortunately, it failed to take into consideration numerous conditions that caused it to be abandoned. On December 10, 2015, when the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Act was reauthorized by President Obama, the name was changed to Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and it replaced the NCLB effort (Darling-Hammond et al., 2016). ESSA empowers schools to design and develop their own accountability system, supports and interventions suitable to their needs (Darling-Hammond et al.). However, the consequences for not meeting targeted improvements changed very little. ESSA’s accountability measures indicate, “Schools that do not earn a ‘C’ grade or higher after two years must close or turn over operations to a charter or an external operator” (Florida Department of Education, 2018, p. 26).

Fisher et al. (2009) found the use of organizational change strategies in the field of education were successful in improving student and school grades. However, they acknowledged that those strategies are not commonly used in education. Their intervention incorporated Kotter and Schlesinger’s (2008) four recommendations to improve the successful implementation of change.

Fisher et al. (2009) identified the video footage as most impactful on the teams because it modeled real-world scenarios. They stated:

The next day, when we showed the video a teacher in first period cried. Concerned we asked her about her reaction following the session. Tearing up again, she said, “He’s one of us and he can do it. It’s not just the people from San Diego. It’s local. I’m so proud of us.” (p. 392)

This teacher’s storytelling of the impact her peer’s success was so impactful, it became the preferred method of training. Their self-efficacy was enriched by their observations and testimonials of their colleagues’ successful implementation of the classroom strategies (Fisher et al., 2009).

Educational institutions must embrace storytelling in their organizational change strategies. Deal and Peterson (2016) recommend storytelling during times of change,
specifically in education. Even though storytelling has not been widely used as an organizational change strategy in education (Deal and Peterson, 2016), practitioners have effectively used it in team building and decision-making strategies (Denning, 2006).

The literature is replete with the benefits storytelling provides in culture, leadership, processes, decision making and identity (Beech and Johnson, 2005; De Cagna, 2001; Kitchell et al., 2000; Lelic, 2001; Letiche et al., 2008; Marshall and Adamic, 2010; Reissner, 2005; Wright, 2005; Yoeli and Berkovich, 2010). The non-threatening and inherent receptibility of storytelling is a viable asset in the implementation of change. The integration of storytelling establishes an environment where values and beliefs can be revised for the survival of the organization (Rindfleish et al., 2009).

In times of crisis, individuals search for understanding (Rhodes et al., 2010). Sensemaking is one of the benefits of storytelling (Reissner, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2010; Weick, 2002). Utilizing and institutionalizing organizational stories as an effective crisis management tool can only be realized once organizational leaders appreciate the dimensions of story’s enduring potential” (Kopp et al., 2011, p. 379).

Statement of the problem
Deal and Peterson (2016) explained that it has become imperative to consider the power of shaping schools internally through its culture. They state commitment and motivation is ensued through storytelling in educational change efforts. They also indicate stories of past successes and difficulties that have resulted in present accomplishments are most beneficial. Every school has a story to tell about overcoming obstacles and becoming victorious amid crisis. It defines their culture and the pride they feel to be a part of the institution. Suddaby and Foster (2017) concluded “history actually offers a valuable but under exploited organizational resource that can be used to motivate and successfully manage change” (p. 35).

According to the 2017 Center on Education Policy Report, many states are beginning to feel the strain on their capacity to improve student achievement and failing schools (Rentner et al., 2017). Rentner et al. indicate that while most of the states are pleased with the federal government’s decision to defer the burden to improve student success to the states, they realize that sacrifices must be made. They reported, of the decision makers in 45 responding states, 23 have identified an increased workload under ESSA than under NCLB with a reduced capacity to implement all its mandates. Most of the states reported there are insufficient federal funds and areas of ambiguity in administration that require technical assistance (Rentner et al., 2017).

The National Assessment of Educational Progress issues The Nation’s Report Card (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018). For the assessment conducted in 2017, the report card results indicate, on average, in reading, there was an increase in the national average for the eighth grade only and no change since 2015 for the fourth grade. For mathematics, there was no change for either grade. Unfortunately, the 2015 report showed a decline in all scores from the 2013 results, which suggests there has been no overall improvement in academic achievement in five years for the country in 4th, 8th or 12th grade for reading and math, with the only exception being 8th-grade reading.

The new ESSA accountability measures indicate “Schools that do not earn a “C” grade or higher after two years must close or turn over operations to a charter or an external operator” (Florida Department of Education, 2018, p. 26). According to the Florida Department of Education, well over 200 schools in the state of Florida alone received a grade that was below a C in 2017. As Masci et al. (2008) ardently supposed:

The confluence of federal mandates, budget cutbacks, increased standardization, high-stakes testing, greater awareness of students’ diversities, technological advances, and political uncertainty has resulted in the “perfect storm” for our secondary public-school administrators and teachers.
Each school is a ship caught in this perfect storm, and each staff member is either a crew person or passenger. (p. 57)

With the states overseeing the efforts, principals and administrators are charged with re-evaluating current practices (Florida Department of Education, 2018). However, implementation of these efforts will fail unless principals and administrators are able to secure school wide commitment (Stollar et al., 2006). Therefore, it has become incumbent upon educational leaders to ascertain effective strategies that will rally the commitment and dedication to turnaround their failing schools (Fisher et al., 2009).

**Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of the role of storytelling during times of organizational change in the field of education. Kitchell et al. (2000) identified storytelling as non-threatening self-reflective tool that motivates change. It could prove beneficial to the field of Education to integrate storytelling in its interventions in organizational change (Marshall and Adamic, 2010; Vasile, 2009; Wines and Hamilton, 2009).

Based on the literature, there are seven important elements to storytelling in organizational change. First, the person telling the story needs to believe in the applicability of the story to the situation. People are often discerning of a person that lacks confidence in their own words. Even if the story is relevant, if the storyteller has no confidence in its applicability, listeners will respond in kind.

Storytelling can be based on individual experience, the organization or industry. However, if the story is to invoke change, it needs to identify the current state, the desired state, the reason for the change, potential obstacles and the need for feedback (Weick, 2002). Second, it is necessary that the story stimulates a positive emotion (Parry, 2008). Denning (2006) indicated the positive emotion will invoke positive action. However, he warned, the effectiveness of a story is hindered if the storyteller attempts to hide negative facts. Rhodes et al. (2010) stated that disastrous endings are as effective as happy endings.

The third element of storytelling reminds the speaker not to be afraid to shift the focus of the story, if it aids in establishing a stronger connection. Boje and Durant (2006) stressed that the key is to provide the essence of the story not the details. However, the fourth element, which is truth, is critical or the storytelling will be ineffective. Denning (2006) explained false information is counterproductive. The fifth element indicates a time conscious story is needed to connect the past to the present and future (Parry, 2008). Mark and Toelken (2009) stated the past cannot be so outdated that it is irrelevant, and the future cannot be so farfetched that it is not feasible.

The final elements of storytelling are intertwined. The sixth element indicates it is important that the story allows dialogue. As Goldman et al. (2009) state, the purpose of the dialogue is to make the tacit explicit. The final element is the logistical result of dialogue in that it requires action. Every story in organizational change results in a call for action (Denning, 2006).

**Participants**

This qualitative study was comprised of ten elementary school principals and/or administrators employed by either Orange, Seminole, Osceola or Volusia County Public Schools, Orange County Charter or Orange County Private schools that are governed by the requirement to participate in national assessments and/or receive Title I funding. There were a total of 51 schools within Orange County that met the criteria, 37 schools in Seminole County, 24 schools in Osceola County and 41 schools in Volusia County. The invitation was sent to each of them and ten responded within the timeframe necessary to be included in the study. Two of the responses were incomplete. Creswell (1998) explained the acceptable sample size for a phenomenological study is up to 10 participants.
Methodology

This study engaged in a qualitative phenomenological research design as expounded upon by Moustakas (1994). Qualitative methods are used to obtain a thick and rich, in-depth description of a topic (Donalek, 2004; Hjelmeland and Knizek, 2010; Townsend et al., 2010). Strauss and Corbin (1998) stated qualitative methods are “used to obtain the intricate details about phenomena such as feelings, thought processes and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more conventional research methods” (p. 11).

Phenomenology is the tradition within qualitative methodology that focuses on the lived experience (Creswell, 1998). Researchers collect the personal descriptions of the participant’s experience relative to the phenomenon being examined (Creswell, 1998). Creswell (1998) requires the descriptions to be analyzed for meanings, and emerging themes. The study was conducted to understand the perception principals and administrators have regarding storytelling during times of critical change in their respective elementary schools of Central Florida. It is the intention of the researcher to obtain the principals and administrators’ lived experience of storytelling narrative within their workplaces. The researcher also desires to extrapolate its potential applications in the field of education.

The data was collected by the online survey instrument called SurveyMonkey™. The instrument was used due to the parameters given by the School Boards to obtain participation. SurveyMonkey™ provides a web-based assessment venue that allows a researcher the ability to design a quality survey that protects the identity of its participants (Inungu et al., 2009; Schulman et al., 2009). The instrument also allows the researcher to ensure only qualified participants complete the survey.

The SurveyMonkey™ website allows the collection of data pertinent to the study. Participant’s age, gender, tenure in education and race were collected for evaluation. All participants were principals or administrators of a Title 1 elementary school within Central Florida that also participates in the state’s annual assessment. The questions were specific to their experience with storytelling and open ended to allow the participants to fully express their perceptions.

Theoretical framework

Kurt Lewin is credited for coining the term “planned change” (Lewin, 1951). Planned change emerged from the fields of psychology, social sciences, and economics. Even though change has been the most explored phenomena in organizations, it is the most difficult to implement (Burnes, 2004; Hacker and Washington, 2004; Liu, 2009; Medley and Akan, 2008; Nelson, 2003). There has been much debate regarding the process of change, how it flows and its various hindrances (Bouckenooghe et al., 2009; Velasquez, 2011; Wang and Ahmed, 2003).

The difficulty in defining organizational change lies in the classification of it as either a process or a state (Velasquez, 2011). Velasquez (2011) stated that the disagreement arises from categorizing the word change as a noun or as a verb in an organizational context. By classifying change as a verb, the HRD professional would view organizational change as a process or a means to an end (Quattrone and Hopper, 2001). This is the predominant opinion regarding change (Kotter and Schlesinger, 2008). However, Lewin’s (1951) definition of organizational change operates on the understanding that organizational change is a noun. He defines organizational change simply as “a desired state of affairs” (Lewin, 1951, p. 224). If the desired state is inconsistent with current conditions, it is necessary that the organization takes steps to move into the appropriate direction.

Organizations must engage in learning to move from an undesirable state to the desired state. Organizations that are unable to learn are unable to change (Liu, 2009). Daft and Huber’s (1986) recommendation to require organizational learning as an essential aspect of organizational change is sound (Schimmel and Muntzlag, 2009).
Kurt Lewin (1951) stated that it is “necessary to refer finally to the total social field with all its essential properties” (p. 235). Without organizational learning, there will be no organizational change.

This research takes an eclectic view of the organizational change and learning literature. Specifically, it looks at critical change through the lens of the phenomenon of storytelling. Stephen Denning (2004) identified several applications for storytelling in organizational communication, specifically, “1) sparking action, 2) communicating who you are, 3) transmitting values, 4) fostering collaboration, 5) taming the grapevine, 6, 7) sharing knowledge, and 8) leading people into the future” (p. 127). This research adds an application to strategic planning by engaging culture, establishing readiness for change, motivation, and strengthening commitment by connecting values and beliefs to the mission and vision.

John Dewey’s (1938) theory of experiential learning that evolved through theorists Kirk Lewin (1997), Peter Senge (1990), Nonaka (1991) and Edgar Schein (1999) revealed an organizational application of storytelling. In the organizational change, research stories are often used to acquire, share, interpret, carry out and store information for the benefit of the organization (Dixon, 1990). Understanding the how storytelling can be effectively implemented to benefit the organization during crisis was paramount to this research.

During times of “uncertain change” (Reissner, 2005, p. 483), storytelling is utilized to generate an understanding of the organization’s vision. The phenomenon of storytelling emerged out of the organizational learning literature (Garund et al., 2010). Storytelling has been identified as a multidisciplinary phenomenon that expands cross-cultures and for centuries has been used for a variety of purposes (Kahan, 2006).

Storytelling has been identified as the “cultural DNA,” by which skilled leaders transfer values and knowledge to new members (Wines and Hamilton, 2009, p. 436). Once understood, storytelling opens avenues that afford the listener the ability to construct new stories from the meanings they have derived (Barry, 1997). Wines and Hamilton (2009) emphasized: “Storytelling is in our nature; it is in our genes” (p. 441).

Narratives and storytelling have been terms interchangeably used by researchers (Barker and Gower, 2010; Barry and Elmes, 1997; Denning, 2006; Gill, 2011; Nissley and Graham, 2009; Rhodes et al., 2010). However, Kopp et al. (2011) advised against their use as transposable terms. Therefore storytelling is defined as “a recollection of events with collective associations that involve interactions of individuals to produce meaning that is applicable to future experiences” (Wilson, 2012, p. 18).

Letiche et al. (2008) explained that organizational learning necessitates leaders develop strong storytelling capabilities. Wright (2005) explained “when managers communicate they are telling one story amongst an infinite number, when we encounter that story we engage in sensemaking to make the story meaningful to us” (p. 96). Organizations can move from the uncertain to a clearer future when the employees are able to reflect and articulate victories and defeats in the organizations history to those experiencing similar situations (Nissley and Graham, 2009; Schein, E., 1996; Schein, E.H., 1996).

Storytelling then empowers the employee to engage in reflection, make the story personal and rewrite it where they become the hero or heroine (De Cagna, 2001; Nissley and Graham, 2009). This results in a “greater commitment to change, because it comes from within the person, even though it was sparked initially by someone else’s story” (De Cagna, 2001, p. 30). Leaders must understand commitment and loyalty to change efforts are built through the shared communication of experiences (Gill, 2011); Skordoulis and Dawson (2007) opined:

Until some serious attention is paid to the concerns, interpretation and sense-making of those experiencing change, and the ways in which these shared experiences further enable and inhibit perceptions and behaviors that affect the outcomes of change, then change is unlikely to succeed. (p. 1000)
Kopp et al. (2011) suggested a “tripartite” approach to dynamic conditions that requires the initiation of change, namely, “pre-crisis, crisis response, and post crisis” (p. 382). Organizations that engage in storytelling both proactively and reactively can greatly reduce or eliminate many barriers to organizational learning and change (Kopp et al., 2011). This is supported by Denning’s (2006) usages of storytelling in group dynamics.

The essential aspects of group dynamics must be incorporated in organizational learning and change strategies, if they are to be successful (Boje and Durant, 2006). According to Wines and Hamilton (2009), stories that touch deeply held values, beliefs and emotions will have the greatest impact on change. Skordoulis and Dawson (2007) explain that a good dialogue derived from storytelling will induce listeners to re-evaluate their values and beliefs through reflection. This reflection will allow them to evaluate the relevance of past experiences to the present, into the future.

**Findings**

The result of the collective meanings derived from the participants’ accounts of their experiences with storytelling emerged two core themes: first, in their opinions, storytelling about the impact teachers can have in the academic success of students engages the culture of the organization and helps them understand and commit to the vision of new educational legislation and enhances their professional development. One teacher stated, “I believe that this method allows for initiatives to be implemented with better understanding and creates a picture of what the conclusions and outcomes will look like. [Storytelling] gets to people’s hearts. Once you have that then you are better able to change minds and instructional practices.” Another teacher explained, storytelling “has helped me to affirm by beliefs in the benefits of such change and also alert me to the perceptions of others and the barriers faced in implementing change.” A third teacher indicated storytelling: “reinforce why you entered the profession in the first place. The stories of our profession renew me and make me recommit to my mission and vision.” All eight responses were similar to these. Second, the participants also believe that while storytelling is only part of the work, it is beneficial in organizational change reform. One teacher summed it up by stating: “Please note I believe that requires a great deal of other work. But stories get to people’s hearts.”

**Conclusions**

The core themes that emerged indicated the principals and/or administrators who participated in this study believed storytelling provides understanding, delivers a consistent message, increases commitment, improves professional development and aligns personal beliefs and organizational culture to the vision of the organization. Finally, even though the participants support the use of storytelling because of its experienced benefits, they believe it is only part of the change process. The findings of this study suggest that storytelling may be an untapped dynamic capability in educational strategic planning as it pertains to change efforts and professional development. The essential elements of storytelling integrate well in planned change processes. The potential of storytelling as a crisis management tool will not be realized until leadership understands its impact (Kopp et al., 2011).

**Recommendations**

People do not change unless they are faced with compelling reasons. When survival is at stake, collective commitment to change efforts is essential. Storytelling elements are recommended as an intervention to be integrated in planned change in both static and dynamic environments. Its benefits are manifest in both. However, its role in change efforts within education has not been widely explored. This paper attempts to engage that exploration.
References


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Further reading


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