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Implementing a Social Identity Approach for Effective Change Management

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Abstract

The social identity perspective asserts that it is the shared connection within a unified group that forms the foundation of successful group functioning. This is particularly salient during change. This review outlines the value and applicability of social identity principles in understanding change management. The first part of the article explains the underpinnings of resilient teams from a social identity perspective. In particular, the social identity approach is introduced, before the roles of shared and multiple contents in times of identity threat (e.g., during organizational change) are discussed. The second part of the article explains social identity strategies to build resilient teams in change contexts. In particular, the review focuses on the 3R's approach (Reflect, Represent, Realize) as a developmental framework to create unique and distinctive social identities during change. Finally, a theoretical advancement of the 3R's is proposed to include Reappraisal to optimize group and individual responses to the stress ubiquitous during change.

Keywords: group dynamics, leadership, vision, cognitive appraisal, social identity theory.

Introduction

You talk about the legacy and what that means... But I think the other thing that was really important was the connection between people—and the greater those connections, the more resilient and the stronger we were, the better we were. – Sir Graham Henry, two-time New Zealand Rugby Union head coach (Kerr, 2013, pg. 80).

Change is multifaceted, evolves fluidly, and is never linear; much like the connections between people. The quote above from World Cup winning and two-time head coach of the most decorated rugby union team—the All Blacks—illustrates that the connections between individuals can create resilient teams in a way that facilitates success. Speaking to this point, one prominent social psychological paradigm that focuses on the *psychological* connections between individuals in groups is the social identity approach (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). The social identity approach provides a valuable contribution to change management literature by explaining the underlining psychosocial mechanisms that influence individual's cognitions and behaviors in collaborative contexts. In this paper it is argued that understanding social identity principles and developing psychological belonging between individuals is crucial during times of change. To this end, the narrative is divided into two parts with the first explaining social identity principles with a particular focus on the role of shared and multiple contents as the underpinnings of resilient teams in times of change. The second part of this paper outlines social identity strategies (i.e., the 3R's framework; Haslam, Reicher, & Platow, 2011) to develop resilient teams through the creation of shared identity in change contexts. Within this framework, an advancement of 3R's to include Reappraisal of the stress inherent during times of change is proposed. Throughout the review responses from an interview conducted by the first author with a Human Resource Director of a multi-national blue-chip organization are drawn upon. It is

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hoped embedding these quotes further illustrate the concepts in practice by providing a real-life perspective on change management.

The Social Identity Approach

Leaders being both decisive and flexible, open and consistent during change is helpful but not as crucial as understanding the importance of bringing people with them –
Human Resource Director.

As highlighted in the preceding quote, the development of a team where individuals are brought together to form a collective entity is fundamental during change. The social identity approach places group processes and the connection between people at its cornerstone in understanding individual and group cognition and behavior (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987). Amongst other social psychological approaches in sport psychology literature (for an overview see Jowett & Lavallee, 2007) including motivational climate, leadership, and motivation, the social identity perspective provides a contemporary advancement through the theoretical principle that social identities govern cognitions and behaviors in groups. Addressing Mayo's (1949) proposal that the psychology of an individual is a product of their personal and social identities, the social identity approach contends that in social contexts people can define themselves as individuals (i.e., personal identity; 'I' and 'me') *and* as group members (i.e., social identity; 'we' and 'us'). Thus, an individual may define themselves in terms of their idiosyncratic personal attributes that make them unique from other individuals, whereas when a group member (e.g., as part of a department group), the self is defined in terms of the characteristics (i.e., contents) that are shared with others who are perceived to be part of the same category (i.e., the in-group). In sum, social identification reflects the extent to which an individual feels they psychologically belong to a group, which

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in turn, has individual (e.g., intrinsic motivation) and group-level (e.g., effective coordination) ramifications (Slater, Evans, & Barker, 2013).

Groups define who we are (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner et al., 1987), and therefore understanding the role of social identities for change management is important for a number of reasons. First, in any situation individuals can think and behave in-line with their personal or social identity. When individuals feel a meaningful attachment to a group their thought processes and actions attune to their social identity (Adarves-Yorno, Postmes, & Haslam, 2006). In other words, employees will think and act for the group cause (e.g., aligning themselves with organizational change and making decisions for the benefit of the group). However, when employees do not feel a meaningful attachment to a group they typically think and act for their individual cause (e.g., opting to leave the company for personal career development). In any social context there are two types of groups; the in-group and out-groups. An in-group is a group that an individual feels a psychological belonging to (e.g., the engineering company an employee works for, or an athlete competing for TeamGB at an Olympic Games; Slater et al., 2013). An out-group is a group that an individual does not psychologically associate them self with (e.g., a different engineering company, rival nations competing at an Olympic Games). Indeed, the in-group is typically defined in reference to an out-group at the same level (Simon & Oakes, 2006). For instance, a supermarket business as the in-group may be defined comparatively to other supermarket businesses vying for the same market share. Second, social identities occur at multiple levels as individuals are members of numerous groups from specific discipline affiliations nested within departments, through business organizations (e.g., De Cremer, van Knippenberg, van Dijke, & Bos, 2006), to broad attachments to nations (e.g., Reicher & Hopkins, 2001). Change is likely to disrupt this continuum of group affiliations, particularly at a department and organizational level. To elaborate, change to team members or new leadership will influence the identity dynamics

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within the in-group. For example, a new leader may propose novel values to be associated with membership of the in-group. Third, the stronger the identification with a particular group, the more an individual sees one self in terms of that group membership (Haslam, 2004). As such, social identification motivates individuals to advance their group's interests, while categorization permits effective group functioning. Further, by acting in their own interests, individuals *also* act in their group's interests because their own and the group's aspirations are congruent and intertwined. To summarise, when individuals identify themselves as group members they see the fate of the group as their own, meaning they are motivated to ensure one's group is unique compared to out-groups (Haslam, 2004). It follows that understanding and working with leaders' and employees' social identities to create a shared sense of "us" is pertinent to facilitate change.

In the context of previous change management frameworks it is clear that the application of social identity principles is valuable. According to By (2005: 378), approaches to change are "contradictory and confusing [...] lacking empirical evidence and often based on unchallenged hypotheses regarding the nature of contemporary organizational change management". Further, these conceptualizations of change behavior and management such as the planned approach (Bamford & Forrester, 2003) and emergent approaches (e.g., Kotter, 1996) broadly do not account for the importance of group dynamics and specifically, neglect turning to the group at the outset. Rather attention is drawn to leaders developing a vision or strategy for change. In contrast, the social identity approach seeks to understand individuals' social identities and develop the psychological connections between groups involved in change. In light of the poor success rate of change programmes and lack of empirical evidence reported (By, 2005), an application of social identity principles would help to facilitate change due to the established underlying theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and

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substantial research evidence across a variety of domains (e.g., organizational, clinical, and health; Haslam, 2014).

Identity Threat and Contents of Identification

A main proposition of social identity theory is that individuals will want to belong to groups that can make a positive contribution to self-esteem (see Haslam, 2004; Tajfel, 1978). Accordingly, as individuals perceive groups to be psychologically salient they exhibit group-oriented cognition and behavior (see Haslam, 2004). Alternatively, individuals will be reluctant to identify with a group that makes a negative contribution to self-esteem because belonging to a negatively distinguished in-group will fail to contribute positively to an individual's self-concept (see Branscombe, Ellemers, Spears, & Doosje, 1999). Negatively distinguished groups include groups that are low in status on a particular factor in comparison to another group, or groups that have received negative evaluation on a specific factor. For example, a business organization would be negatively distinguished on the dimension of success when the organization performs poorly in comparison to a rival firm. A business organization would also be negatively distinguished on the dimension of success when the organization has performed poorly in reference to their own performance standards. Based on social identity theory it is expected that belonging to a negatively distinguished group will threaten in-group identities because group members' self-esteem may be restricted by continuing to identify themselves with their underperforming in-group (Branscombe et al., 1999). For example, an employee maintaining strong identification with a poor performing department is likely to report low levels of self-esteem in their working environment if performance reflects the sole characteristic of the group.

Empirical data has indicated that performance can be compromised when social identities carry negative connotations. Rydell, McConnell, and Beilock (2009) examined the

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effects of activating social identities with either positive implications (i.e., college students are good at mathematics) or negative implications (i.e., women are bad at mathematics). Across four conditions participants were either instructed of: (i) nothing that suggested relevant social identities of college students or women—control condition; (ii) a positive implication that college students are good at mathematics—college identity condition; (iii) a negative implication that women are bad at mathematics—gender identity condition; or (vi) the positive implication that college students are good at mathematics and the negative implication that women are bad at mathematics—multiple-identity condition. Rydell et al. (2009) found that when gender differences in mathematics ability were not highlighted performance was equally good irrespective of the presentation of the college student stereotype. When gender differences in mathematics ability were communicated performance was better for those participants who also received the college student stereotype in comparison to those participants who did not receive the college student stereotype. In fact, the only decrement in performance was observed in the condition where a negative implication for gender was highlighted (i.e., the gender identity condition). These results suggest that receiving relevant threat to a social identity can be detrimental to performance in instances where a social identity carries negative connotations. Organizational change provides a clear threat to employees' social identity.

There are various psychological and behavioral responses displayed when individuals belong to negatively distinguished in-groups. Rao, Davis, and Ward (2000) found that members of a business organization in the NASDAQ stock exchange market moved to a rival organization in the NYSE because being a member of an organization in the NYSE was considered to be of a higher status. In other words, movement between groups (i.e., social mobility) provided an opportunity for individuals to enhance their self-esteem by belonging to a more positively distinguished in-group. In readiness to move to another group,

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individuals have been found to distance themselves from their in-group to avoid being stereotyped with their negative in-group (e.g., Spears, Doosje, & Ellemers, 1997). The key message here is that during episodes of social identity threat, in-group identities may become less salient which leads to a number of psychological and behavioral responses that are harmful to how groups function and perform. Overall, empirical findings would suggest that the make-up of in-group identities need to change to protect groups in response to social identity threat, such as that posed during organizational change. The notion of protecting groups aligns with team resilience, which has been defined in the sport psychology literature by Morgan, Sarkar, and Fletcher (2013, pg. 552) as a “dynamic, psychosocial process which protects a group of individuals from the potential negative effect of stressors they collectively encounter.” Morgan et al. (2013) reported that group identity is a key, but previously overlooked, characteristic of resilient teams. In addition, individual resilience can be indexed via psychophysiological patterns with reference to stressful situations, where positive appraisal (challenge) of a stressful situation leads to adaptation, and negative appraisal (threat) leads to maladaptation (Seery, 2011). To this end, it has been suggested that “greater resilience is evidenced by the exhibition of a challenge state, and potential positive (or less negative) outcomes (e.g., intended skill or tactical execution)” (Turner & Barker, 2013, p. 3). In the current paper, it is argued that group factors (e.g., social identities) have a major role in the exhibition of a challenge state. Bringing together these literatures it would appear the development of multiple and flexible in-group identities could preserve group and individual functioning and performance during organizational change.

So, during change, an organization could encourage employees to think about their level of belongingness to other sub-categories that exist within the overall organizational unit to help promote multiple and flexible social identities. For example, an employee could belong to a friendship group, a department, a faculty, and/or varying project groups (and not

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just an overall organizational unit per se; see Haslam, 2004). Furthermore, during a period of identity threat where one level of social identity may break down (e.g., a project fails), an employee could draw upon other levels of social identity (e.g., their friendship group) that exist within the organization to preserve self-esteem. Based upon social identity theory (see Tajfel, 1978), the preserved self-esteem experienced by belonging to unthreatened sub-categories within an organization would continue to motivate employees towards organizational initiatives, goals, and outcomes.

Emerging research studies have turned their attention to whether receiving negative evaluation can also threaten the *meaning* attached to (or content behind) in-group identities given that negative evaluation can involve receiving negative information about factors that could be aligned to a valued component of an in-group identity. Such content associated with in-group identities are akin to group values, which effect employees' behavior:

Group values shape work performance, you only have to look at the City of London and the financial crisis to see this. Group values set out how teams operate and what behaviors are seen as positive and what behaviors are viewed negatively – Human Resource Director.

In an experimental study by Evans, Coffee, Barker, and Haslam (2015) participants were assigned to one of two conditions to examine the influence of threat to identity content (or group values). Condition one were led to believe that their in-group identity was centred solely on gaining success on a repeated performance task—results identity condition. Put simply, all that mattered to participants in condition one was succeeding on tasks. Condition two were led to believe that their in-group identity was centred solely on a willingness to provide support to in-group members on the repeated performance task—support identity condition. All that mattered to participants in condition two was supporting each other

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throughout tasks. Participants responded to questions based on five sporting videos and were provided with false performance feedback following each of the video clips that suggested their group had been less successful than bogus out-groups. Self-report data indicated higher levels of social identity and in-group prototypicality (i.e., the extent to which individual group members represent the in-group as a whole) in the support identity condition than the results identity condition. Further, out-group prototypicality (i.e., the extent to which individual group members represent the out-group as a whole) and social mobility were significantly lower in the support identity condition than the results identity condition. Performance significantly deteriorated after trial two within the results identity condition whilst performance was maintained across all five performance trials within the support identity condition. These results suggest that receiving relevant threat to the *meaning* attached to social identities can harm the psychology (i.e., level of identity), behavior (i.e., social mobility), and performance of in-groups. These findings can be applied to organizations in the midst of change. Consider an organization that is only focused on achieving excellent performance standards (e.g., in light of increased expenses they need to increase their income by 5%). Restricting the meaning of an in-group identity to achieving excellence in performance would place group functioning in jeopardy during a situation where that organization fails to achieve excellent performance (i.e., income is not increased by 5%). Based on social identity theory (see Haslam, 2004; Tajfel, 1978) failing to achieve excellent performance standards would make a negative contribution to employees' self-concept because their affiliation with the organization is built solely on excellent performance.

Accordingly, Evans et al. (2015) further investigated whether increasing the repository of group meaning could protect in-groups from falling apart during an episode of relevant identity content threat (e.g., organizational change). In a second experiment, Evans et al. assigned 40 students to one of two conditions. Within both conditions participants were

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given a dual social identity content whereby in-group identities were centred on gaining success and a willingness to provide support to in-group members on a repeated performance task. So, what mattered to participants in both conditions was succeeding and supporting one another throughout tasks. Groups were presented with the same five video clips and answered the same ten questions that were used in experiment 1. Participants within condition one received false performance feedback that suggested repeated in-group failure—results threat condition. Participants within condition two were presented with false support feedback that implied in-group members were less willing to provide support to one another in comparison to bogus out-groups—support threat condition. Data indicated that in-group members significantly lowered the importance placed on the threatened component of identity content from pre-threat to post-threat whilst maintaining the importance placed on the unthreatened aspect of identity content. Behavioral outcomes (e.g., results achieved or willingness to support) aligned to the threatened component of identity content were low or reduced over time. These findings imply that broadened meanings attached to in-group identities could protect in-group functioning in instances where an aspect of social identity comes under threat such as during change. Using the previous example of an organization that is focused solely on achieving excellent performance it would be suggested that expanding the meaning of the organization to incorporate other group contents (e.g., having a high levels of team-spirit, excellent camaraderie) would be beneficial for reducing the risk of the group dissolving during periods where excellent performance cannot be attained. Social identity theory (see Haslam, 2004; Tajfel, 1978) contends that changing in-group contents would protect in-group identities because positive group distinction can be maintained between an in-group and comparative out-groups. Therefore, association with the in-group provides group members with a positive contribution to their self-concept (see Elsbach & Kramer, 1996; Lalonde, 1992).

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Summary

The first part of this review has broadly outlined the value and applicability of social identity principles in understanding change management. More precisely, the narrative has introduced the social identity approach before focusing on the need to develop multiple identity contents in times of identity threat (e.g., during organizational change). In short, from a social identity perspective these principles represent the underpinnings of resilient teams. Building on these foundations, the second part of this review proposes strategies embedded with the social identity perspective to create and strengthen social identification during change through the 3R's framework (Reflect, Represent, Realize; Haslam et al., 2011). We conclude the article by highlighting the personal benefits for individuals of shared identification in terms of their cognitive appraisal of the stress inherent during change.

Building a Resilient Team: Reflect, Represent, Realize.

Passive resistance is the most difficult challenge, where people say the right things at meetings and in mails but take no action. When people are openly resisting the change it is possible to discuss and work through with them. When people take a political approach and hide behind excuses for not implementing agreed actions it becomes difficult – Human Resource Director.

The quote above reflects some of the barriers associated with change management. Underpinned by social identity principles, in this section strategies to overcome these barriers and facilitate effective change management are discussed. The following discussion of strategies to develop resilient teams is orientated by the 3R's framework proposed by Haslam et al. (2011). Rooted in the social identity approach, the 3R's approach is a developmental strategy that draws parallels with other social identity approaches to optimise organizational practice (e.g., the ASIPRe model; Haslam, Eggins, & Reynolds, 2003). The 3R's are an

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innovative approach that inspires power and mobilisation *through*, rather than *over*, the group (see Turner, 2005). That is, the model is based on the premise that the creation of a unified collective entity can be best nurtured by working *through* the group, rather than imposing broad changes or specific new values *over* the group. In this section we outline the 3R's framework as a social identity approach to build resilient teams during change through leadership. The overarching vision of the 3R's approach is to create a shared and distinctive social identity through Reflection, Representation, and Realization. Three objectives are posited to make this vision possible: (i) discover what identities and associated goals are important to individuals and bring these together collectively (Reflection); (ii) represent the characteristics of the group's identity and embody the group ideal (Representation); and (iii) facilitate opportunities and activities to attain the collective vision (Realization). The following discussion explains strategies that engage with these processes of reflection, representation, and realization against the backdrop of change management.

Reflection

Reflecting involves leaders actively listening, having conversations, and observing the group to take an interest in the group's identities and meanings (Haslam et al., 2011). In short, reflecting concerns discovering what identities matter to people. As highlighted by Slater, Coffee, Barker, and Evans (2014) reflecting in this manner draws similarities with person-centred counselling conceived by Carl Rogers (1980). Rogers outlined the importance of establishing a strong working alliance between counselor and client brought about through empathy, unconditional positive regard, and congruence (or genuineness). Leadership that reflects with the group to develop strong mutual connections (i.e., a shared identity) aligns with the person-centred approach. For example, when reflecting with the group, leaders are putting the group's needs first (as the counselor would put the client's needs first in person-centred therapy; Rogers, 1980). To illustrate, when change dictates a merger of two

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previously distinct departments, leaders could seek to understand both group's identities and aspirations. An example of such reflection was found in the BBC Prison Study (see Reicher & Haslam 2006). Specifically, one participant, a senior negotiator in a large British Trade Union, spent time contemplating in a prison cell and engaging in conversation with prisoners, guards, and experimenters (i.e., three distinct groups) to understand the regime and their identities before articulating a shared group vision to inmates and guards (see Haslam & Reicher, 2007). Reflection enabled the participant to position a novel vision in the fabric of the prison regime and group identities inherent within the prison context, which led to endorsement of his leadership. Additional researchers have reported evidence that leadership that turns to the group has a positive effect on the individual group members (De Cremer et al., 2006). In particular, De Cremer et al. (2006) demonstrated that group members' reported higher levels of self-esteem when the leader was self-sacrificial (i.e., put the group's need first), as opposed to self-benefiting (i.e., putting their own needs first). Indeed, a key area of reflection is to discover how members define their group's identity, that is, what content(s) do group members associate with their group?

The specific contents of identity that groups define themselves with and embrace during organizational change are vital given that contents govern thoughts and actions (Adarves-Yorno et al., 2006). Nevertheless, during episodes of change it is possible that in-group members can clash on their opinions of how group life should be lived out because change can result in social differences occurring in groups (Haslam et al., 2003). Moreover, individuals in a staff team will plausibly diverge in the content(s) they ascribe to their identity (Postmes et al., 2005), yet the importance of shared and multiple contents of identity have been shown as underpinning resilient teams in the current review and are reflected in recent data. For instance, Slater, Coffee, Barker, Haslam, and Steffens (under review) found that the specific content (e.g., results, support, or having fun) upon which leaders and group members

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converge is of less importance than the act of converging itself. That is, more than being part of the same group, creating shared contents within the group is crucial. While researchers (e.g., Evans et al., 2015; Rydell et al., 2009) have also highlighted the protective role for maintaining shared identification of multiple contents associated with group membership in times of identity threat (e.g., during change).

One method through which shared and multiple contents can be established during change is through a team building intervention known as Personal-Disclosure Mutual-Sharing (PDMS: Dunn & Holt, 2004; Holt & Dunn, 2006). PDMS requires individuals to publicly disclose previously unknown personal stories and information to fellow group members (Dunn & Holt, 2004). Research in elite sport has found that PDMS sessions that are relationship-orientated strengthen identity content centred on support in teams that at baseline assessment were predominantly focused on results (Evans, Slater, Turner, & Barker, 2013). Given that the restructuring of groups typically leads to the addition or removal of group members during change, facilitating PDMS represents a hallmark of reflection as group members (including leaders) have the opportunity to share previously unknown personal stories. This team-based reflection fosters mutual understanding, empathy for one another, and ultimately collaboration (Dunn & Holt, 2004), all facilitators of change and performance.

Indeed, Evans et al. (2013) reported an improvement in objective team performance from pre- to post-PDMS phases that may be due to the broadening of identity content (i.e., a focus on results and supportive relationships). More precisely, broadening identity content could have provided the opportunity for athletes to draw on their supportive aspect of social identity when their results content had been threatened by team defeats. A shortcoming of Evans et al.'s (2013) study was that only a single PDMS session was conducted and, in-line with PDMS guidelines (Holt & Dunn, 2006), the session focused on developing relationships (i.e., support). Building on this research, Barker, Evans, Coffee, Slater, and McCarthy (2014)

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employed a dual-phase PDMS intervention with sessions focused on developing support and results identity contents within the context of an elite cricket team's pre-season tour. Aligned with change management where employees' social support network is disrupted, an overseas cricket tour represents a removal of immediate providers of athletes' social support (e.g., family and friends). Barker et al. (2014) reported that in accordance with Evans et al. (2013) the relationship-orientated PDMS significantly strengthened athletes' importance of support identity content, while a performance-orientated PDMS session significantly strengthened athletes' importance of results identity content and team confidence. In sum, initial evidence has suggested that PDMS is effective in providing a mechanism through which group members can reflect and contribute to the broadening of in-group's identity contents (e.g., a focus on support). Further, initial evidence indicates that to glean the positive effects of PDMS repeatedly, the focus (i.e., the instructions) of the session needs to change. The influence of PDMS in change contexts, both acutely and repeatedly, is yet to be established but provides an exciting opportunity for future applied research. Nevertheless, evidence from elite sport may have implications for change by highlighting the value of team building strategies that can increase members understanding of the other identities and contents within their group. In turn, foundations to develop shared and multiple contents that resonate with all group members are provided to subsequently facilitate change.

Representation

The second stage of the 3R's is representing, which involves leaders making decisions and behaving in-line with the shared and multiple characteristics of the group (Haslam et al., 2011). The incremental nature of the 3R's is evident here as leaders' capacity to represent the group will depend on whether they have first reflected on their group's identity (e.g., through PDMS). In short, to represent the group, leaders must work for "us" by making decisions that reflect the shared and multiple contents and are group-orientated. In addition, leaders can

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propose ideas centred upon what the group can become in the future (Steffens, Haslam, Ryan, & Kessler, 2013). This resonates with the proactive nature of leadership in aiming to transform the group's reality for the better. Or, more accurately, to achieve the collective vision. Leadership processes of representing the group ideal (i.e., embodying the group prototype) and providing inspiring ideas for the future that are rooted in the group's identity will facilitate change. In a retrospective study Steffens and Haslam (2013) investigated Australian Prime Ministerial candidates vying for success in political elections across 43 campaigns. Broadly, successful candidates used more collective pronouns, for example, displaying 61% more references to "we" and "us" and using these terms on average once every 79 words (compared to 136 words for losers). Thus, electoral endorsement was associated with increased use of collective language that demonstrates an engagement with a collective identity that leaders sought to lead, subsequently permitting such leaders to represent "us". Accordingly, using collective language emphasizes that we are in this together, and that we are a unified and distinct group. Speaking to this point, it is difficult to envisage a change context within which supportive relationships would not be important. Leaders highlighting their psychological belonging with the group through collective language may implicitly enhance perceived social support as a vital coping resource during times of change. Clearly the use of "we" and "us" cannot be superficial and must be qualified by action, for instance, through decision making for the benefit of the group and group-orientated behavior. Indeed, group members that say "we" but act for "me" will inhibit group functioning during change, thus the automatic prevalence of thoughts and behaviors that represent "us", which is a result of a shared sense of identity, is crucial.

One way in which leaders and group members can demonstrate that they represent the group during change is to act within the shared and multiple contents that were created during the reflecting stage. For example, if the content of supportive relationships emerged as a key

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meaning within the context of change whereby two previously distinct groups merged, then leaders acting in a supportive manner, and being the most supportive member of the group will result in the leader being seen as standing for the group. An example of this could include the leader allocating time to communicate with each member of staff on an individual or sub-group basis during the dynamic phases of change. Researchers have demonstrated that such leaders who represent their group's identity content are perceived as more effective (van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005), trustworthy (Geissner & van Knippenberg, 2008), and charismatic (van Dijke & De Cremer, 2010). Furthermore, to continue to facilitate change, leaders may consider explicitly communicating and reinforcing the collective meanings developed by the group during the reflecting stage. To illustrate, using environmental cue words and artwork that align with the group content(s) has been found to orient behavior towards the specific messages displayed (e.g., directing results-focused and supportive-focused behavior; Evans et al., 2015; Slater et al., under review). Such strategies can demonstrate that the leader represents the group and can further facilitate the creation of shared rather than contrasting contents of identity. Ensuring that, despite change, a shared value system prevails that drives organizations' towards their vision and targets.

It is worth noting the interesting interplay between, and effects of, shared and contrasting contents of identity. The development of shared characteristics should enable a newly formed and congruent social identity to emerge that will be distinct to the identity formed prior to the reflecting phase and/or change. The newly formed social identity needs to be organic which means that the content(s) defining the overall unit needs to recognize and embrace any sub-group differences. Consider the example of a soccer team. A soccer team has several sub-groups (e.g., goalkeepers, defenders, midfielders, strikers). Defenders may value being resolute as a defensive unit and authoritative over the opposition strikers. Strikers may value being creative and positive in their forward play. Therefore, when bringing the

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soccer team together it is important that the vision of the soccer team acknowledge the potential variation in content and characteristics between the soccer team sub-groups. The idea of realizing sub-group differences is highlighted in research by Egings et al. (2002) who demonstrated that in-group members feel that their input has been greatly valued when their distinct sub-group identity has been considered.

Speaking to this point, a recent laboratory study by Slater and colleagues (Slater et al., under review) examined an environment in which the group's content contrasted with the leader's. That is, despite belonging to the same group, followers were part of the group for a different reason to the leader. Indeed, also in reality, the meanings individuals ascribe to their group membership vary at an intragroup level (Postmes et al., 2005), a notion that is likely to be accentuated during change. Slater and colleagues exposed participants to a power through or a power over leadership approach and both perceived (e.g., trust in the leader) and behavioral indicators (e.g., mobilized effort measured via time on task) were assessed. In the experiment, power through leadership involved the leader reflecting upon the group's content (which was in contrast to the leader's) and then representing the group by proposing a vision that encompassed both the group's and the leader's valued content of identity. In contrast, power over leadership involved the leader imparting their own content (which was in contrast to the group) onto the group. In short, the power through leader represented the group (i.e., acted for "us"), whereas the power over leader did not (i.e., acted for "me"). Results of the experiment demonstrated the positive influence of leaders drawing on power through principles opposed to a power over approach in creating a shared group identity, together with increased perceived and behavioral outcomes. More specifically, the leader that represented the group helped to create shared values, increased perceptions of leadership effectiveness, and heightened followers' behavioral mobilized effort on task. Further, this effect was maintained following repeated group failure. Thus, leadership that creates a sense

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of identity based upon shared values and represents such values may garner team resilience that represents togetherness through adversity (e.g., during change).

Realization

Realizing involves leaders organizing opportunities for the group to behave in-line with the group's identity contents and, in turn, progress towards the collective vision (Haslam et al., 2011). Planning and delivering activities or structures that reflect the shared and multiple identity contents are important to allow the positive benefits of social identities to become reality. To explain, experimental results have indicated that group members were behaviorally mobilized during activities that aligned with shared meanings, whereas, when activities did not align with the group's meaning, participants typically disengaged (Slater et al., under review). These data have implications for change suggesting that new groups will be mobilized when activities align with shared and multiple contents of the group.

Accordingly, planning and organizing events that provide "us" the opportunity to live out the collective meaning in reality highlights the underpinning role of identity content in the achievement of the group's vision. Indeed, qualitative research that examined leadership surrounding the London 2012 Olympic Games documented the manner in which identity contents became the day-to-day fabric of group life and ultimately steered the group's direction (Slater, Barker, Coffee, & Jones, 2015). Thus, the communication of clear values that underpin the collective vision is crucial to the realization phase. One method of involving in-group members in the realization of shared goals is to select sub-group members as representatives (Haslam et al., 2003). This could be adopted to facilitate change. An example of an organization that has used sub-group representatives to help the realization of the collective vision is provided by the 2003 England Rugby Union World Cup winning team. Sir Clive Woodward (2003 England Rugby Union manager) selected several rugby players as sub-group representatives (e.g., Matt Dawson was partially responsible for co-ordinating the

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efforts of the forwards) to involve athletes in helping the England Rugby Union team realize its vision during the 2003 World Cup. In short, the leader instigated the establishment of a structure, through senior players, that embedded the vision in reality. Crucially from an identity perspective the precise selection of players that represented the team values and epitomized the team ideal may optimize the influence these players and the manager will have (see Slater, 2014 for a similar example). More broadly, such leadership aligns with a power through, opposed to a power over, approach to leadership (see Turner, 2005, for review) where group members are invested in the process and empowered to embed the collective values throughout the team.

Indeed, research by Evans, Edwards, and Slater (2015) has demonstrated the effects of leaders who are able to embed identity principles through translating group vision into reality. Participants in the study by Evans et al. (2015) were presented with one of two vignettes. Both vignettes asked participants to imagine belonging to a University sports team where the social identity of in-group members was focused purely on being creative and innovative as a team. Both vignettes suggested that participants had a shared identity with a coach who also valued the creativity and innovation in the team. The coach in the first vignette was described as an identity embedder in the lead-up to a hypothetical University tournament by seeking out innovation for team members (e.g., by recruiting Sport Scientists to work on novel training methods with the team). The coach in the alternate vignette was described as an identity non-embedder in the lead-up to the hypothetical tournament by failing to seek out innovation for team members (e.g., by working on traditional training methods with the team). Participants presented with the identity embedding leader reported significantly higher levels of identity with their coach and perceived their coach to be significantly more influential, trustworthy, effective, and representative of the in-group in comparison to participants presented with the identity non-embedding leader. Being presented with the identity embedding leader also led

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to significantly lower levels of conflict with the coach and higher levels of reported mobilized effort compared to being presented with the identity non-embedding leader. Overall, the findings emphasize that in-group members will form more favourable perceptions of leaders and display behaviors that are beneficial for in-group functioning (e.g., mobilization) when a leader is seen to be turning vision into reality. Thus, to facilitate change, once shared values have been developed, the leader must progress the group towards living these values out in reality. Crucially, prior completion of the Reflecting and Representing phases means that this vision mirrors the investment and empowerment of the team and, in short, is authentically *collective*.

Summary of 3R Framework

Drawing on social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), the preceding discussion has highlighted how the development of shared identity will motivate employees to invest their resources (e.g., effort, concentration) to advance their group membership during change. Adopting the 3R's framework (Haslam et al., 2011) may provide an evidence-based process for the creation of a distinctive identity that encourages shared and multiple contents to facilitate the management of change. For leaders of changing teams, the 3R's model provides controllable actions that can be implemented to facilitate change in a collaborative and adaptive manner. Accordingly, groups may be in a more resilient position to deal with the challenge of change, rather than the negative connotations typically associated with change management indicated in the following quote:

Change is perceived as almost entirely negative and, in most cases, little is done to alleviate this – Human Resource Director.

Such negative connotations elicit themselves through stress felt individually. Indeed, change is stressful, and because within many organizational contexts change is continual;

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stress is ubiquitous. In the final part of the paper, a proposal is reviewed. The proposal that the impact of a novel, shared, and distinctive identity created at a group-level (e.g., through the 3Rs) has facilitative implications, through social support, for individuals' responses to the stress inherent within change.

Social Identity, Stress and Social Support: Reappraisal as the 4th R?

Research overwhelmingly indicates that the human stress response is multidimensional and transactional, in that there are many ways that humans can elicit a stress response, dependent on the transaction between the individual and the environment. This transactional approach to stress reactivity has been best encapsulated by cognitive appraisal theory (Lazarus, 1966) that was pioneered by Richard Lazarus and colleagues (e.g., Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Broadly, cognitive appraisal theory indicated that on approach to meaningful and goal relevant situations, one can appraise the situation as a challenge or a threat (see Turner & Jones, 2014, for review). More recent developments (see Gross, 1998, for review) have suggested that it is also possible to reappraise situations that have already been subject to cognitive appraisal. In other words, that which was once appraised as a threat can be reappraised as a challenge, and visa versa. Reappraisal typically refers to an antecedent-focused strategy reflecting attempts to construe a potential emotion-eliciting situation in non-emotional terms (Gross, 2002). Indeed, in Lazarus' early studies instructional sets were used to encourage participants to perceive a film showing surgical procedures as harmless, thus leading to lower stress reactivity (e.g., Lazarus & Alfert, 1964). Alternatively, reappraisal can also be considered a response-focused strategy where an individual attempts to alter emotional responding once the emotion has been generated (Gross, 2002). That is, an employee approaching a board meeting may experience feelings of anxiety, which they could reappraise as potentially beneficial for their performance (see Jamieson, Mendes, & Nock,

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2013). In contrast, an antecedent-focused reappraisal strategy would encourage the employee to perceive the exam as less threatening thus attenuating the generation of anxiety.

Importantly, the appraisal and reappraisal processes are part of a complex psychophysiological reaction to stress that can be noxious or non-noxious for human performance and health. Thus, there is a great opportunity to understand the impact of stress reappraisals, in the context of social environments and group processes, during change. One prominent framework that can be used to understand the human stress response is the Theory of Challenge and Threat States in Athletes (TCTSA; Jones, Meijen, McCarthy, & Sheffield, 2009). The TCTSA builds on the work of Lazarus, and specifically extends the biopsychosocial (BPS) model of challenge and threat (Blascovich & Mendes, 2000). While the BPS model brought together cognitive and neuroendocrine stress reactions within an integrated theory, the TCTSA provides specific cognitive and emotional elements that inform and occur as a result of the cognitive appraisal and reappraisal process.

Following on from Lazarus and the BPS model, the TCTSA proposes that one can approach stressful situations (such as change) in either a challenge or a threat state, dictated by the interaction between demand cognitive appraisals and resource cognitive appraisals. If one cognitively appraises high resources in comparison to demand appraisals, then a challenge state occurs which has a specific constellation of psychophysiological reactivity and is associated with superior performance (Moore, Vine, Wilson, & Freeman, 2012; Turner et al., 2013) and maintained health (cf. O'Donovan et al., 2012). In contrast, if one cognitively appraises low resources in comparison to demand appraisals, then a threat state occurs instead, which again has its own constellation of psychophysiological reactivity, and is associated with inferior performance (Moore et al., 2012; Turner et al., 2013) and adverse health (cf. O'Donovan et al., 2012). Far from being a theory that applies only to athletes as

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the name may suggest, the TCTSA is applicable to all performance settings including organizational environments.

Cognitive appraisals can occur consciously and unconsciously (Blascovich & Mendes, 2000). In the TCTSA the demand appraisals comprise perceptions of danger (physical and esteem), uncertainty, and required effort in a situation. Resource appraisals relate to perceived ability to cope with the demands of a situation and comprise three interrelated constructs; self-efficacy, perceptions of control, and goal orientation (approach vs. avoidance goals; Jones et al., 2009). Clearly, for an individual undergoing or experiencing organizational change each demand and resource appraisal is relevant. Danger may come from potential humiliation if one's role is degraded or adjusted. Uncertainty may come from one being unsure as to how the change will impact one's work and life. Required effort may stem from new job responsibilities and the learning of new skills. If these demand appraisals are met with a belief in one's ability to maintain expected levels of performance, a perception that this maintenance in performance is within one's control, and a focus on what can be achieved through change rather than a focus on what can be lost, then a challenge state may prevail.

Given that it is the interaction between demand and resource appraisals that determine challenge and threat states (Blascovich & Mendes, 2000), it is clear that any psychosocial factor (e.g., social identity or social support) that may produce a positive reappraisal is highly valuable. Specifically, social identity and social support may enhance resource appraisals and/or reduce demand appraisals. That is, reducing perceptions of danger, uncertainty and required effort, and/or enhancing self-efficacy, perceptions of control, and approach goals, will enhance the likelihood of approaching stressful situations in a challenge state rather than a threat state. The social context that is very much a part of an individual's environment must be considered as part of the transactional approach to approaching stressful situations

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(Haslam, O'Brien, Jetten, Vormedal, & Penan, 2005). One of the more direct ways that an individual's interaction with their social context can influence the stress responses is through the giving and receiving of social support. Research spanning four decades indicates that social support may be a buffer for the adverse effects of stress (Haslam et al., 2005). In other words, social support promotes a positive reappraisal of stress. The protective effects of social support in the face of stress has been stated as 'the buffering hypothesis' (Cohen & McKay, 1984), and much research has been dedicated to understanding the mechanisms and implications of social support on human performance and health under stress.

"It has to be from us": Using Social Support During Change

As an illustration, we can use the case of an employee who due to leaner financial times and change within her company, is required to interview for a new job within the same company. For her demand appraisals, we can estimate that uncertainty could be lowered by colleagues and superiors providing informational support such as guidance, advice, and problem solving suggestions, related to the process that she must now go through. Requirement for effort could be lowered by colleagues, superiors, friends, and family providing instrumental support in the form of time provisions for sufficient preparation and useful tools to enhance the efficiency of learning key information for the interview. This could also include the provision of money from her employer to undertake CPD activities to enhance key-skills. Indeed, instrumental (or tangible) support of this nature may have psychological implications as the provision may be interpreted as evidence of being valued, suggesting information about one's relationship with a support system (Cohen & McKay, 1984). Danger to esteem could be lowered by the in-group through emotional support and reinforcing that no matter what happens (e.g., failure), the group will accept and value her (Cohen & McKay, 1984).

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For her resources appraisals, informational support has clear applications. Through informational support enhanced coping perceptions can be fostered, driven by the enhancement of self-efficacy, perceived control, and a focus on approach goals, as applied in past research (e.g., Turner et al., 2014). For self-efficacy, group members can provide information that encourages her to reflect on times where she has been successful in similar endeavours. For control, the in-group can orient her towards aspects of her interview performance that she can control such as her preparation and behavior on meeting and greeting interviewers. For approach goals, leaders can encourage her to focus on the opportunity she has to demonstrate her many skills and abilities in the interview, instead of focusing on where she might fail to impress (e.g., Pearlin & Schooler, 1978). In effect, the purpose of social support provided by the in-group in the situation described is to reduce demand appraisals and enhance resource appraisals to promote a challenge state (which has facilitative psychophysiological implications, e.g., a positive emotional response, decreased TPR, and increased CO), so that she can fulfil her potential in the stressful interview situation brought about by organizational change.

It is important to reiterate that the support described above needs to be offered by the in-group, or by people that she shares a strong social identification with, so that she makes use of the support she is being offered. For example, if the processes of Reflection, Representation, and Realization have created a shared social identity then this will likely mediate the positive effect of social support. Social support offered by the company from individuals who are not part of the in-group will not be as effective as that offered by members of the in-group, and can actually increase the stress experienced by the individual (Gross, Wallston, & Pilliavan, 1979). In other words, when undergoing change, to support staff more effectively, it is important to develop strong identification within a staff group (e.g., through the 3R's) so that social support can have the desired effect on individual's

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stress reactions. The social support allows an opportunity for cognitive reappraisal. So for the employee having to interview for a new role within a changing company, the social support received from her in-group will promote a positive response (challenge state) to the stressor she is facing, that will allow her to fulfil her potential and decrease the likelihood of health related impingements on her engagement with work.

In sum, the creation of a distinctive and shared social identity at a group level may have additional benefits for group members personally in terms of cognitive reappraisal. In particular, the psychological belonging associated with the in-group means that the social support provides a valued resource at a personal level, subsequently facilitating the reappraisal of stress. In turn, social identification and support play a positive role in promoting an adaptive psychophysiological response (i.e., a challenge state) to the ubiquitous stress of organizational change.

Conclusion

This article has highlighted how understanding social identity principles and developing *psychological* belonging between individuals is crucial during times of change. Developing a shared identity during change allows individuals to feel a meaningful attachment to group (e.g., an organization or a project team), from which individuals think and behave *for* the group. Indeed, the importance of working with and enhancing social identities during organizational change is clear. The current review has particularly spoke to the influence of identity threat and creation of shared and multiple contents as underpinning mechanisms from which psychologically resilient teams, who manage change efficiently, emerge. Further, the 3R's approach (Haslam et al., 2011), with the addition of Reappraisal, provides organizations facing change with a framework to create a shared and distinctive identity that is the hallmark of resilient teams. The group (e.g., received social support) and

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personal (e.g., reappraisal) benefits of individuals belonging to a distinctive identity during the stressful context of change should not be overlooked. Change can be a positive challenge to be embraced and not a threat to be evaded.

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