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Collective Inclusioning: A Grounded Theory of a Bottom-Up Approach to Innovation and Leading

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Abstract

This paper is a grounded theory study of how leaders (e.g., entrepreneurs, managers, etc.) engage people in challenging undertakings (e.g., innovation) that require everyone's commitment to such a degree that they would have to go beyond what could be reasonably expected in order to succeed. Company leaders sometimes wonder why their employees no longer show the same responsibility towards their work, and why they are more concerned with internal politics than solving customer problems. It is because company leaders no longer apply collective inclusioning to the same extent as they did in the past. Collective inclusioning can be applied in four ways by convincing, afinitizing, goal congruencing, and engaging. It can lead to fostering strong units of people for taking on challenging undertakings. Collective inclusioning is a complementing theory to other strategic management and leading theories. It offers a new perspective on how to implement a bottom-up approach to innovation.

Keywords: afinitizing, convincing, engaging, goal congruencing, innovating.

Introduction

HMS Industrial Networks AB is a Swedish company providing product solutions to connect different devices, such as robots, control systems, motors, and sensors, to different industrial networks. HMS was founded in 1988. In 1994/1995 their Anybus product was invented. In the following years, the Anybus became an innovation, and HMS became a market leader in the industrial communication industry (Lysek, Danilovic, & Liu, 2016).

Despite HMS' success within the industrial communication industry ("Frost & Sullivan," 2013), I was more curious about the first decade of the company's history. I began to wonder what could have been the main concern of the people who had been working for HMS between 1988 and 1999/2000 and helped the company overcome all of its challenges. By the time the core variable emerged, I had discovered what had been of most importance to both managers and employees at HMS during these years.

I also discovered that a good salary was not the main reason for people staying with HMS during all these years. Money was not everything. One employee, employed by HMS before 1999/2000 told me that, "We all wanted to finish our projects on time and we all

wanted our company to succeed. I do not have any specific benefits from it today, but I have a job that I like a lot". By the time the core variable emerged, I realized that HMS' employees could not explain exactly why they had struggled so hard in the past to make HMS succeed, despite not having a good salary, or owning any company shares. People may wonder why someone would invest so much time and work into a company that, in fact, was not theirs. I argue that the answer lies within this core variable, which explains the behavior of HMS' managers and how they were able to increase their employee's level of commitment to fulfilling the company's goals and their own entrepreneurial dreams.

Methodology

This study was performed at HMS Industrial Networks AB, where I have been employed since June 2012. I began my Ph.D. studies within innovation sciences in January 2014. My employment has allowed me to engage more closely with HMS' employees. Discovering the main concern of people in a social environment is the main reason for using classic grounded theory (Holton & Walsh, 2017; Hartman, 2001; Glaser, 1978, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I used classic grounded theory for this study to discover the main concern of the people employed by HMS between 1988 and 1999/2000.

Data collection process

Grounded theory "has the power to move beyond conjecture and perception to reveal the underlying processes of what is [truly] going on" (Lowe, 1998), but the researcher must remain alert to the risk of forcing the data during the collection process. I was therefore careful not to allow my interest in innovation to influence the people that I interviewed, and to talk only about what was of interest to them during the time when they worked for HMS from 1988 to 1999/2000. I was aware of the fact that by doing so, whatever data I collected, could turn out to be unrelated to innovation. It was a risk that I had to accept in order to avoid forcing the data.

A different approach was used to discover the behavior of managers during this study. Instead of interviewing managers, I interviewed employees. As a result, I collected data on what employees experienced that managers were doing, instead of just collecting data on what managers believed that they were doing. This approach allowed me to capture how managers influenced their employees, whether or not they were aware of it.

I performed 47 semi-structured and open-ended interviews during 2014 and 2015. HMS employed approximately 60 people in 1999/2000. All interviews were recorded, lasting between 10 minutes and 75 minutes. A total of 23 hours and 40 minutes of data was collected. Out of the 47 interviews, only 16 were transcribed and analyzed for this study before saturation was reached. They were randomly selected from the 47 interviews. The 16 interviews lasted for eight hours and 40 minutes, which corresponded to 1/3 of all the data recorded. These 16 interviews also yielded a total of 121 A4-pages of empirical data, which were used during the data analysis process. All 16 people were engineers. Ten of them still work for HMS, while the remaining six do not. All but two were male. The oldest person was born in 1967 and the youngest in 1975.

Data analysis process

Following the tenets of classic grounded theory (Glaser, 1978, 1998; Glaser & Strauss, 1967), I began the data analysis process with substantive coding, which starts with open coding and continues later with selective coding. Open coding (Holton & Walsh, 2017) was performed on the transcribed interview data with no predetermined focus. The data were coded for any existing concepts. Conceptualization was utilized to get “out of the data and off the descriptive level to conceptualization” (Glaser, 2011, p. 2).

The constant comparison method (Glaser, 1965) and theoretical memoing were systematically applied during the whole study. These techniques were intertwined with theoretical sampling, substantive coding, and theoretical coding, and utilized until the core variable “collective inclusioning” emerged. Once the core variable was discovered, selective coding on the core variable was started. A switch from open coding to selective coding during this stage “allows delimiting the data collection and analysis to just the core category and any potentially related concepts” (Holton & Walsh, 2017, p. 53).

If a concept, regardless of its novelty or personal preference of the analyst, does not have relevance in relation to the core category, it is dropped from subsequent analysis and theoretical elaboration. In this way the core category becomes a guide to further data collection and theoretical sampling. (Holton & Walsh, 2017, p. 84)

Theoretical sampling is a technique that is applied during open and selective coding, in tandem with constant comparison. It “jointly collects, codes and analyzes data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them in order to develop [the emerging] theory” (Holton & Walsh, 2017, p. 37). The difference in the technique during open and selective coding is that it is performed in a much more focused fashion on the core variable during selective coding.

The constant comparison method contributed to generating more than 200 paragraphs of data and an even larger memo bank. Saturation was reached when no more concepts (categories or properties of categories) emerged. At that point, theoretical coding was started, which “refers to the modeling of the relationships between and among the core category and related concepts as a fully integrated theory. It is the final stage in the coding process” (Holton & Walsh, 2017, p. 86). During this stage, memos were sorted (Glaser, 2005) and compared with different theoretical codes (Glaser, 1978). The constant comparison method was utilized until associations between concepts within the memos were discovered. The final stage included the write-up of the paper (Glaser, 2012), during which collective inclusioning was compared with the literature.

A Theory of Collective Inclusioning

The main concern is supposed to highlight “the issue or problem that occupies much of the action and attention in the research setting, whereas the core [variable] explains how that concern or problem is managed, processed, or resolved” (Holton & Walsh, 2017, p. 88).

Some managers at HMS wonder why many of their employees are no longer showing the same passion towards their work as they did in the past. Why they are more concerned with internal politics rather than solving customer problems? The findings in this study show that people are less committed to the company because the same managers are no longer utilizing collective inclusioning as they did in the past. They occupy themselves with presentations and meetings and they talk less often with their employees. As a result, employees become more interested in internal politics than customers and the company.

One employee told me that,

We solved everything to the best of our ability. We were all very motivated and committed, we who worked for HMS in those days. We saw the company as ours. We were like a small family, where everyone worked very tightly with each other to reach the same goal, and it was perhaps this family feeling that made us go a step further than what we normally would have done, when we made our efforts within the company.

This feeling of being a "family" is the most important consequence of collective inclusioning that a company can achieve.

I realize that managers can have had other concerns as well (e.g., survival, sales, quality or growth), but from the perspective of their employees, the empirical data show that their main concern is to convince their employees to increase their commitment towards the company. Most of the employees did not see their managers opportunizing, but they saw them collectively inclusioning. They remember how it felt to be collectively included by their managers, as the best thing about the company. Apparently, managers believe this to be important for the survival and growth of the company. Otherwise they would not utilize the process of collective inclusioning.

The theory of collective inclusioning is best explained by first defining the four main dimensions (sub-sub-core variables) of collective inclusioning: convincing, afinitizing, goal congruencing, and engaging. Together they reflect how managers are able to increase their employees' level of commitment towards the company and towards fulfilling their goals. In order to achieve collective inclusioning, managers need to apply convincing, afinitizing, goal congruencing, and engaging simultaneously. These four basic social psychological processes (Glaser, 1978) have the highest effect when they are applied collectively.

On a more abstract level, collective inclusioning can also be divided into two other dimensions (sub-core variables) of collective inclusioning: persuaded inclusioning and cultivated inclusioning. They will be explained later in this paper.

Convincing

Employees usually perform their job well without requiring additional motivation from their managers. However, during certain circumstances, managers need their employees to go beyond their normal degree of commitment, especially concerning achieving company goals that depend on the collective commitment of everyone. In these situations, managers need to convince all their employees to help the company succeed. To do so, they use their skill of convincing to influence how responsible employees may feel for the company, its future,

its products, and its customers. Managers can convince their employees to commit more to the company by either pleading or by disclosing their own level of commitment. Their method of convincing can stretch from overt to covert (from employees being aware to being unaware that they are being convinced) and from intentional to unintentional (from managers being aware to being unaware that they are convincing their employees).

Convincing concerns what managers do to persuade employees to struggle harder for the company. It does not concern what managers allow their employees to do or what employees are doing themselves, which is more related to the sub-sub-core variable of engaging. It also does not concern how managers convince employees of fulfilling company goals, which is more related to the sub-sub-core variable of goal congruencing. Convincing has four main patterns of behavior: opportunizing, contagious energizing, transparent openness, and achievement recognizing.

Opportunizing

Opportunizing occurs when managers capture new business opportunities. When managers “create, identify, seize or exploit situations” (Christiansen, 2006, p. 109) that offer employees new challenges in the form of, for example, a new business or a new technology. Opportunizing occurs when managers capture new opportunities and employees are given the chance to manage or supervise those opportunities. Opportunizing can influence employees to increase their level of commitment.

Contagious energizing

Contagious energizing comes from managers when they show a deep passion, drive, and commitment to their work and to the company, and that energy which they display spreads to other employees. It occurs when their passion and energy become contagious and spreads to other employees, and drives them to increase their own level of commitment. Contagious energizing occurs when managers show a strong belief in themselves and the company and when they show courage and take risks, and lead by example.

Transparent openness

Transparent openness occurs when managers focus on creating an open and transparent atmosphere, on freely sharing ideas, knowledge and information, on collaborative or cooperative management, and on decision-making. It occurs when managers show no prestige. It occurs when managers allow employees freedom with responsibility—the freedom to decide when and where to work, and how and what should be done to complete their projects, as long as they are responsible towards their customers and their deadlines. Transparent openness occurs when managers allow employees to become experts in their field and when they allow employees to influence the direction and the future of the company. It occurs when managers focus on creating a flat organization with no chasm between themselves and their employees.

When managers allow their employees to have autonomy, self-governance, and partake in decision-making, they will become more self-confident. They will become more responsible for their own decisions and actions. Their feeling of responsibility and respect

increases towards each other, the company, and their customers. They start focusing more on product quality and on taking more personal responsibility. They make an effort to avoid disappointing their customers and colleagues, and to reach different deadlines before they expire. Transparent openness can influence employees to feel that the company is theirs.

Achievement recognizing

Achievement recognizing occurs when managers reward or give credit to employees for a job well done or for achieving their goal. It is an extrinsic motivation that can convince employees to increase their level of commitment. A more convincing form of achievement recognizing occurs when customers show appreciation for the work performed by employees and when employees recognize that their contribution to the company is significant.

Afinitizing

Afinitizing can be utilized to create a strong “we” feeling and to make employees feel that they are part of building the company. It can be applied to increase employees’ level of commitment and responsibility towards each other and the company. Afinitizing has two main patterns of behavior: social and technological atmospherings.

Social atmospherings

Social atmospherings occur when managers encourage the creation of an intimate and pleasant atmosphere in the company, a collective corporate culture where employees focus on helping each other rather than on internal politics. Social atmospherings occur when managers help employees to finish tasks on time, when there is a risk of missing a deadline, or when employees from different departments help each other, and especially when it concerns tasks that the managers would normally not perform. Social atmospherings occur when managers and employees see each other as one people; it occurs when they socialize. It creates a feeling of belongingness and companionship, a feeling of “coming home”. It creates a strong team feeling even across departments, and a feeling of being a family. Social atmospherings can convince employees to increase their level of commitment.

Technological atmospherings

Technological atmospherings occur when managers surround employees with new technologies that create a bond between all employees with a passion for new technologies. It creates a stimulating atmosphere of new ideas, new technological creations, and of developing innovations. Technological atmospherings concern employees who are involved in developing state-of-the-art technologies that are in the cutting edge of the industry. Technological atmospherings can convince employees to increase their level of commitment.

Goal Congruencing

Goal congruencing occurs when managers set up and agree upon goals for their company and for their employees with the aim of helping the company survive and grow. Some goals can be extrinsically motivating while others can be intrinsically motivating (Sansone & Harackiewicz, 2000). A well-defined company goal is one that can be translated into meaningful sub-goals within the company's different departments. A badly defined company goal does not diffuse into different departments and becomes impractical from the perspective of their employees. Goal congruencing can also allow employees to fulfill their own goals and desires.

Goal congruencing has two main patterns of behavior: collective congruencing and self-congruencing. Sometimes they overlap, as they can both be personal and shared by the whole company, e.g. with the goal of fulfilling customer needs, of not disappointing customers, and of keeping deadlines (even those that are barely possible to keep).

Collective congruencing

Collective congruencing occurs when managers and employees agree upon goals that are the same for everyone and for the whole company. It occurs when all employees feel that they want the company to succeed and they want to help fulfill that goal. Company goals help define its direction and allow employees to feel that they are going in the same direction; they are struggling together towards a common goal. Seeing colleagues fulfill company goals can also influence other employees to increase their level of commitment to the company. Through goal congruencing, managers can provide employees an opportunity to excel and to feel like winners.

Self-congruencing

Self-congruencing occurs when employees agree upon self-imposed goals, which may or may not be in line with the company's goals. However, the more managers influence employees to increase their level of commitment to the company, the more their own goals will be in line with those of the company. Self-congruencing can influence employees to feel a higher responsibility and obligation towards the company, their customers, and their colleagues. It can also influence employees to work for the company because of their passion for developing new technologies or desire to work for an exciting industry. Self-congruencing can influence employees to increase their level of commitment.

Engaging

Engaging differs from the other three sub-sub-core variables which describe what managers do in order to persuade employees to increase their collective commitment to the company. Engaging is more about what managers allow employees to do, and what employees are doing as a consequence of the other three sub-sub-core variables.

Engaging allows employees to take matters in their own hands in order to aid the company in surviving and growing. It influences employees to become experts in their field,

to care to product quality, to care for solving customer problems, and to care for fulfilling customer needs. Engaging may even influence them to become more innovative and help the company reach beyond its current limits. Engaging has three main patterns of behavior: association establishing, risk tolerating, and dutiful infringing.

Association establishing

Association establishing occurs when employees want to prove to themselves and to others that they are in fact valuable members of the team. Establishing their belongingness as team members is their primary concern. It can be achieved by evidencing that they can develop the products that the company needs, that they can deliver the level of product quality that the company seeks, or that they can accomplish sales and be an invaluable partner in aiding in the company's survival and growth. Association establishing can influence employees to become more creative and innovative, to increase their level of responsibility, and to convince them to increase their level of commitment to the company.

Risk tolerating

Risk tolerating allows employees to take upon themselves more responsibility towards their products, their customers, each other, and the company. It can encourage employees to tolerate closer collaboration and contact with customers, which sometimes is stressful. It allows employees to tolerate change, tolerate complicated but unspecified project assignments, and not to fear making decisions on their own; it allows employees to tolerate diverse work assignments, to tolerate large amount of work, and to tolerate coping with stress. Risk tolerating makes employees unafraid to take upon themselves complicated projects, to try new things, and to make bold decisions with a lot of courage. It can convince employees to increase their level of commitment to the company.

Dutiful infringing

Dutiful infringing engages employees to feel a self-imposed duty, to aid others unconditionally in solving their tasks, in reaching their deadlines on time, and in solving customer problems. Despite having clear areas of responsibility, it influences employees to help each other because in doing so they help the company to grow. Dutiful infringing can encourage employees to increase their level of commitment to the company.

Persuaded and Cultivated Inclusioning

Persuaded inclusioning intertwines some of the concepts that describe how managers behave in order to persuade employees to increase their level of commitment to the company. Their commitment is perceived as being persuaded on purpose rather than being naturally grown. The concerned sub-sub-core variables (and categories) are convincing (opportunizing, contagious energizing, transparent openness, and achievement recognizing) and goal congruencing (collective congruencing). Cultivated inclusioning intertwines the remaining concepts that describe how managers behave (sometimes unintentionally) and in so doing, persuade employees to increase their level of commitment to the company. Their commitment is not perceived as being persuaded by managers, but rather as naturally

grown. The concerned sub-sub-core variables (and categories) are afinitizing (social and technological atmospherizing), goal congruencing (self-congruencing), and engaging (association establishing, risk tolerating, and dutiful infringing).

Theoretical Coding

The previous sections described the sub-core and sub-sub-core variables of collective inclusioning. This section focuses on how these variables relate to each other from the perspective of the theoretical coding families presented by Glaser (1978).

To make this section more formal, I have decided to replace certain substantive words with others. I will use the words "leaders", "people", "clients" and "team and unit" instead of "managers", "employees", "customers" and "department".

Convincing, when used consciously to maneuver people, belongs to the strategy family. When used unconsciously it belongs to the causal-consequence model. Convincing affects afinitizing by influencing people's feeling of belongingness. It affects goal congruencing by convincing people to congruence on common goals. It affects engaging by convincing people to struggle towards those goals together, by convincing them to engage more, and by increasing their commitment and responsibility. However, convincing may not be enough to increase people's commitment to the desired level. It may also require afinitizing by cultivating a strong "we" feeling, for a stronger effect. When leaders create a "we" feeling, they can do it to different degrees. People may feel that they are acquaintances, colleagues, friends, or that they are more like a family with a collective purpose. Afinitizing is therefore also part of the degree family.

Afinitizing can be used to increase the importance of fulfilling goals that are vital to people who belong to the same team or unit. Afinitizing can increase an employee's feeling of responsibility, which, in turn, can increase his or her level of helpfulness and feeling of belongingness. Leaders can therefore use afinitizing to influence goal congruencing and engaging, and vice versa, which makes all three belong to the interactive family.

Goal congruencing can also influence people's sense of responsibility, and their need to achieve goals set for the team or unit. However, engaging allows people to take action fulfilling those goals. It affects their responsibility towards products, clients, each other, and the company. Goals can therefore be affected by engaging, and vice versa, making goal congruencing and engaging part of the interactive family.

Collective inclusioning is a basic social psychological process explaining how leaders use convincing to influence the other three sub-sub-core variables from the perspective of a causal-consequence model. However, once convincing starts to affect the other three variables, they in turn begin to affect each other similar to Bandura's principle of reciprocal determinism (Cervone & Pervin, 2014). "Thus once the ball is rolling they feed on each other" (Glaser, 1978, p. 76), interactively, and it becomes harder to know which one came first. "Nor does it matter, probably" (Glaser, 1978, p. 76).

Discussion

This paper represents the first iteration of the theory of collective inclusioning. Glaser (1978) and Holton and Walsh (2017) offered certain criteria for selecting and confirming a core variable, such as collective inclusioning. These criteria are centrality, frequency, relevance, grab and variability (Holton & Walsh, 2017).

The core variable, collective inclusioning, appeared to be central to the managers' concerns regarding how to persuade their employees to increase their level of commitment to their company so that the company survives, grows, and succeeds. The core variable reoccurred frequently in the data, and it was seen as a stable pattern. It related meaningfully and easily to its different variables. It was imaginary and explanatory, and it was conceptually transcending, having the possibility to be discovered in other substantive areas beyond the area from where it emerged. Finally, its essential meaning remained the same whether managers performed collective inclusioning well or not.

The term "collective inclusioning" applies to all people within a team, unit, or an organization. Collective inclusioning is what leaders do to include everyone in their vision and mission without being selective to a few individuals. After all, challenging undertakings require everyone's assistance, because "it is never the industry leader who makes the big leap[, but] the inventor or small guy" (Peters & Waterman Jr., 2015, pp. 115-116) in the company.

Collective inclusioning occurs when leaders tries to bring a team together and make its people become something more than what each of them can achieve on their own, to turn them into a force for innovation, and to make the whole become something greater than the sum of each of the individual parts. This view also reflects how collective inclusioning works. As important as each of its four sub-sub-core variables are alone, they work best when they are utilized together. Convincing usually initiates the others, but once all four sub-sub-core variables are being used, they have an interactive effect on each other. Diminishing the usage of any of them will have a deteriorating effect on the whole process of collective inclusioning. In other words, collective inclusioning is a process where the "whole is greater than the sum of the parts" (Cervone & Pervin, 2014, p. 11).

Collective Inclusioning as a Bottom-Up Approach to Innovation

This study was not about innovation per say. Nor was it about discovering determinants vital for innovation to come to pass. Nevertheless, as the theory of collective inclusioning emerged, I realized that it could be a valuable method for leaders (e.g. entrepreneurs, managers, or innovation champions) to utilize if they are in pursue of innovation.

Innovation is an intricate process, which "is difficult to manage. It's risky, expensive, and unpredictable" (Morris, 2011, p. 1). As far back as during the first half of the 20th century, Joseph Schumpeter (as cited in McCraw, 2009) argued that "no company can ever retain a position at the top of its industry without doing very much more than this—without blazing new trails, without being devoted, heart and soul to the business alone" (p. 161). He

argued that companies cannot allow themselves to fall into comfortable routines, because if they do, they “will soon be overtaken by aggressive, risk-taking competitive entrepreneurs” (McCraw, 2009, p. 161).

However, the main point is that innovations are phenomena created by people who go beyond what is expected of them and create something amazing. Leaders have therefore wondered for many years what they should do to influence people to become more innovative. While many people have offered different suggestions (Llopis, 2014), collective inclusioning offers a new perspective on the topic.

A strength of collective inclusioning, if applied as part of an innovation process, is the possibility of using it as a bottom-up approach rather than a top-down approach to innovation (Gaynor, 2013a, 2013b; “Google grows on people,” 2013; Ross, Mitchell, & May, 2012). Instead of forcing innovation activities upon people with a top-down approach, the bottom-up approach encourages people to be innovative. The bottom-up approach convinces people to work in innovative teams by setting up well-defined goals for employees to follow (convincing affects goal congruencing), “participative safety” by allowing employees to be part of decision making from a safe perspective (convincing affects engaging), “climate for excellence” by creating work practices that encourage real commitment from people (convincing affects afinitizing), and “support for innovation” by nurturing innovations to occur (Anderson, Hardy, & West, 1992).

Comparing Collective Inclusioning to other Theories

Collective inclusioning offers a different perspective on what managers do to persuade their employees to increase their commitment towards their company in order to survive and grow. However, it is possible that managers sometimes neglect collective inclusioning. How collective inclusioning was performed in the past and how it is performed today could be an indication of collective inclusioning being neglected. Neglecting collective inclusioning was, however, not part of this study, because my current empirical data contains no information on the subject, but it could be a concern for a future study. Nevertheless, if managers are interested in performing challenging undertakings that require the collective commitment of all their employees, then they need to increase their efforts in improving their collective inclusioning.

Literature related to grounded theory

Collective inclusioning is not the only grounded theory for strategic management and leading. Christiansen (2005, 2006, 2011) introduced the concept of opportunizing, which focuses on “creating, seizing and exploiting opportunities that sustain the survival or growth of the business” (Christiansen, 2011, p. 204). It “explains how companies recurrently create, identify, seize or exploit situations to maintain their growth or survival. Opportunizing is the recurrent creation and re-creation of opportunities in business” (Christiansen, 2006, p. 109).

Christiansen (2006, p. 109) argues that opportunizing is “what business managers do and do all the time” (2006, p. 109). I would rather state that opportunizing is but one of the main things that managers do. And while opportunizing may occur more frequently, collective inclusioning is more spasmodic in its nature. Managers in start-up companies probably perform collective inclusioning more frequently, but as companies grow, they often incline on its practice.

A similarity between collective inclusioning and opportunizing is that they both have steering behaviour as their most obvious and frequently indicated pattern. However, while collective inclusioning has a category named achievement recognizing, which has certain similarities with conditional befriending, its focus is not on all type of people (e.g. customers, suppliers, etc.), but only on employees. Furthermore, since conditional befriending always has a condition for its steering behaviour, it is most likely seen as the trigger (the cause) of the desired behavior of the person in question. Achievement recognizing however, is always performed after (as a consequence to) an employee’s successful completion of a challenging undertaking.

Opportunizing also involves confidence-building, which includes certain trust-building techniques (saming, transparency, and distinguishing) that are able to “facilitate the modification or maintenance or prevention of people’s behaviour . . . in such a manner that the company’s survival or growth is sustained” (Christiansen, 2011, p. 199). However, confidence-building did not appear as an important variable in the process of collective inclusioning. It may not be absent, but probably taken for granted. Saming on the other hand has certain similarities to collective congruencing, but without incorporating self-congruencing. “Distinguishing” has certain similarities to achievement recognizing, but achievement recognizing does not focus on confidence building. And “transparency” has certain similarities to transparent openness, but transparent openness also focuses on other issues, such as making managers and employees equal. Furthermore, the main focus of collective inclusioning is not opportunizing. Among the other patterns of opportunizing, weighing up could also be related to engaging in the process of collective inclusioning.

Collective inclusioning and opportunizing may have similar concepts, but they are applied differently. They focus on increasing the company’s survival or growth, but in different ways; they may even complement each other.

Holton (2005) published a paper on the basic social psychological process of rehumanizing, which “explains how knowledge worker[s] restore the human dimension in their work relationships and working environments” (p. 4). It “is characterised by authenticity, depth and meaning, recognition and respect, safety and healing and kindred sharing” (Holton, 2005, p. 4). Within this theory, authenticity “accelerates likening and bonding of members, facilitating interaction and open relationships that enable networks to fluctuate freely” (Holton, 2005, p. 4), which holds similarities to social atmospherizing (afinitizing). The “depth and meaning that characterises fluctuating support network interactions creates a stickiness that bonds network members to each other and to their work” (Holton, 2005, p. 4). As such, it holds similarities to social and technological atmospherizing (afinitizing), opportunizing and achievement recognizing (convincing). Recognition and respect, which “for diversity and individuality enhance authenticity and

encourage creativity and sharing within the network" (Holton, 2005, p. 5), holds similarities to achievement recognizing (convincing). Recognizing "also offers safety and healing by creating an enabling context for coping with change in the workplace" (Holton, 2005, p. 5), which can be found in risk tolerating (engaging). Holton's theory also includes kindred sharing, which "facilitates openness, network bonding and mutual respect, generating energy, creativity and self-confidence in network members" (Holton, 2005, p. 5). It in turn holds similarities to transparent openness and contagious energizing (convincing). Rehumanizing also involves the three stages of finding and likening, igniting passions, and mutual engagement, all of which hold similarities to social atmospherizing, contagious energizing, and association establishing.

Thus, in summary, while opportunizing, rehumanizing, and collective inclusioning may have similar ingredients, their recipes are quite different. Collective inclusioning differs from them because it focuses mainly on increasing people's commitment to a company and their commitment to taking on challenging undertakings.

Andriopoulos and Lowe (2000) presented another theory called perpetual challenging, which explains how creative organizations enhance the internal drive of their employees towards creating innovations. This theory has four sub-core variables, adventuring, overt confronting, portfolioing, and opportunizing, with many similarities to convincing, goal congruencing and engaging of collective inclusioning.

In addition to that, Lindh (2011) presented a theory of reciprocal engagement that addresses how organizations are established and grow by strengthening their relationships with other actors, and how relationships are foremost dependent on how well managers engage their employees. This theory also has many similarities to convincing, engaging and afinitizing of collective inclusioning.

According to Glaser (2011), a researcher should only work on one slice of the big picture at the time because the big picture may have several slices where each of them has its own main concern. All these aforementioned theories may therefore represent different slices of a bigger picture. Collective inclusioning is a complementing theory to these theories; while it does not diminish any of them, it cannot be fully substituted by them either.

A more comprehensive review of the literature concerning quality management was not performed during this study. The comparison to the literature is therefore limited. However, I plan to improve the comparison of the theory to the literature of quality management in my dissertation.

Literature related to psychology and leading

As innovative as HMS' employees were in the past, they are no longer as driven as they were during the company's first decade. The reason I would argue this point is their managers no longer apply collective inclusioning to the same extent they did back then. While there are other theories concerning strategic management and leading in the literature, collective inclusioning does not undermine their validity. Instead, it adds

substance to the other theories by presenting a new perspective on how managers can persuade their employees to increase their level of commitment to their company.

Peters and Waterman Jr. (2015) argued that managers who promote innovation allow their employees to feel like winners. One way of doing that is through positive reinforcement. Positive reinforcement can be applied by "walking the plant floor" (Peters & Waterman Jr., 2015, p. 15), a method that requires managers to go out to their employees on a daily basis, be part of their daily work, show interest in what they are doing, and award them for a job well done. "When you think about it, with management's time being as scarce as it is, that form of reinforcement may be the most powerful of all" (Peters & Waterman Jr., 2015, p. 71). HMS' managers often "walked the plant floor" in the past, which is part of convincing and afinitizing in the process of collective inclusioning.

According to Peters and Waterman Jr. (2015), "lasting commitment to a task is engendered only by fostering conditions that build intrinsic motivations" (p. 72). Employees "must believe that a task is inherently worthwhile if they really are to be committed to it" (p. 72). Managers who promote innovation "tap the inherent worth of the task as a source of intrinsic motivation for their employees" (p. 72). HMS' managers allowed their employees to set their own goals in the past. Employees were given lots of space to take initiatives, "finding their own paths, and so making the task and its outcome their own" (p. 73). Intrinsic motivation is therefore part of self-congruencing in the process of collective inclusioning.

Managers at HMS also captured every opportunity they could in the past. They accepted any kind of engineering projects from their customers. They never thought that a project could be too complicated for them to handle. They were prone to risk-taking, were courageous, and always thought of themselves as winners. This way of thinking is also an important part of convincing and engaging in the process of collective inclusioning.

Other aspect of collective inclusioning involves belongingness (afinitizing), which, according to Abraham Maslow, is a fundamental human motivation, and "our basic human need for social acceptance and companionship" (Holt et al., 2012, p. 15). Maslow (Holt et al., 2012) also discussed self-actualization, which is similar to self-congruencing. Self-actualization motivates us "to explore activities for their intrinsic satisfaction rather than to gain esteem and belongingness" (Holt et al., 2012, p. 404). Carl Rogers also argued that in order for a person to achieve self-actualization they have to reach a state of congruence. It means that self-actualization occurs when the person's ideal self (who they want to be) is in congruence with their actual behavior (their self-image) (Holt et al., 2012). Self-actualization is part of self-congruencing in the theory of collective inclusioning. Collective inclusioning also includes and values the three main needs of the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), competence (related to self-congruencing), autonomy (related to transparent openness), and relatedness (related to social atmospherings).

Finally, as previously mentioned, afinitizing is the most important variable of collective inclusioning because of its ability to create a strong feeling of belongingness for employees. Afinitizing can create a strong "we" feeling, "the extent to which members of a group are bound together" (Myers, 2014, p. 201). This is also known as cohesiveness, and

"[t]he more cohesive a group is, the more power it gains over its members" (Myers, 2014, p. 201). Nevertheless, collective inclusioning reaches its highest peak when people start to refer to each other as a family.

Collective Inclusioning as a Transcending Theory

In my opinion, collective inclusioning can also be applied to other substantive areas and not only within companies. It can be used by any type of leaders (e.g. coaches or officers) with an interest of collecting a team of people for solving problems of a challenging nature.

The 2015 movie *Burnt*, directed by John Wells, shows a good example of how collective inclusioning can be transcending. *Burnt* features a chef named Adam Jones (actor Bradley Cooper) on his way to restore his former reputation and undertake the challenge of getting a third Michelin star. In the movie, Adam applies opportunizing and contagious energizing to inspire his co-workers. Later on, he learns to apply transparent openness and achievement recognizing, which are parts of convincing. He provides his co-workers with a clear goal by applying goal congruencing and he provides them with freedom with responsibility, which influences engaging by association establishing, risk tolerating and dutiful infringing. Adam is also told that "there is strength in needing others, not weakness". As he realizes that, Adam and his co-workers start to work together in unity with negligible distinction among each other—part of transparent openness and social atmospherizing. Near the end of the movie, Adam is told that "We cook together. We take care of each other, you can't do it alone. No one can. You have to trust us. We're your family". When you reach a point where employees refer to each other as a family, then you know you have effectively achieved collective inclusioning.

Burnt does not only represent a good example of a bottom-up approach to innovation, but also how collective inclusioning can be conceptually transcending. The relevance of this example may be argued as it is a movie rather than a real life observation. However, since all is data, as Glaser (2002) put it, my purpose is not to prove but to exemplify that collective inclusioning can be discovered in other areas beyond this study.

Conclusion

Collective inclusioning emerged as a core variable during this grounded theory study, performed at a company named HMS Industrial Networks AB. It explains how managers at HMS resolved one of their main concerns of persuading their employees in increasing their level of commitment towards their company. Collective inclusioning also affects behavior, which is important because "[w]ithout being able to modify people's behavior effectively, no company can survive or grow" (Christiansen, 2006, p. 120).

Collective inclusioning offers a new approach to engaging people in challenging undertakings. Managers may sometimes wonder how to convince employees to take on greater responsibility for their work and their customers, how to engage them in innovative activities, how to convince them to adhere to the goals set by the company, and how to

convince them that everyone has to help out much more for the future of “their company”. These issues are addressed by collective inclusioning.

Collective inclusioning offers a different perspective on how managers can influence their employees to increase their commitment to the company. It is a complementing theory to other strategic management and leading theories. Collective inclusion has four equally important sub-sub-core variables where the “whole is greater than the sum of the parts” (Cervone & Pervin, 2014, p. 11). Through afinitizing managers can show their employees the meaning of belongingness, by cultivating a strong “we” feeling and a feeling of being a family. Through goal congruencing they can give their employees a purpose. Through convincing they can show their employees that what they do matters to them and to the company, and provide them with the tools to take action. And through engaging they can see how their employees take action and become more innovative.

HMS’ managers applied collective inclusioning regularly in the past. As a result, their employees put customer problems before internal politics. They were innovative and the company grew to become a market leader within the industrial communication industry. Collective inclusioning can be of aid to managers in fostering strong units of people for taking on challenging undertakings, such as creating innovations and building successful companies.

Collective inclusioning contributes to the existing literature on innovation, strategic management and leading by offering insights into how managers and their employees can collectively take on challenging undertakings, and of the value of the softer issues that managers frequently ignore when addressing the survival or growth of their business (Peters & Waterman Jr., 2015). Adopting the basic social process of collective inclusioning as a conceptual framework may assist managers in developing organizational strategies that support the creation of new innovations.

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