Management and Hyper-Management: Models of Empowered Organizational Leadership *

Patricia Bromley & John W. Meyer
Stanford University

* Draft date: July 24, 2018. This paper benefitted from comments by participants in the Workshop on Institutional Analysis (Vienna 2017), and Stanford’s Networks & Organizations workshop (2018).

Abstract

Conceptions of management and leadership have expanded and transformed dramatically in recent decades. Beyond the management of people through routine controls, the call is for leadership of empowered actors. And beyond the effective pursuit of given goals, the demand is for innovative and entrepreneurial vision. This change occurs because both organizations and individuals are structured in liberal society as sovereign, bounded and autonomous social actors, with the capacity and authority to choose a wide range of purposes, and to have a unique identity. Organizations are legitimately entitled to incorporate people and functional groups that are themselves empowered social actors; this requires greatly expanded managerial roles. These changes help explain core tensions in management: Contemporary hyper-management involves expanding claims of responsibility and capability (and compensation), hand in hand with the shrinking legitimacy of imperative authority and the organizational chart.
Management and Hyper-Management: Models of Empowered Organizational Leadership

In recent decades, cultural models of elite organizational roles have evolved and expanded in striking ways. Former managers, business owners, philanthropists, and charity workers are recast as “innovators,” “change-makers,” “entrepreneurs,” and “transformative leaders.” These new roles call for extraordinary abilities to spearhead dramatic innovation, disruption, and change in all social spheres. Moreover, influence is to be exercised by the ability to develop a compelling vision and harmonize diverse interests around it; persuasion and inspiration are the core tools of the day, rather than coercion and compliance. In this paper, we account for this evolution in models of organizational leadership towards “hyper-management,” arguing that contemporary emphases are interdependent with an expansion of management in general (Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall 2002; Bromley & Meyer 2015).

Examples loosely depict what we mean by hyper-management; we move toward a more complete conceptualization later. A standard dichotomy in the business literature contrasts the vision of hyper-managers (called “leaders”) with a core alternative (called “managers”). For example, Harvard Business Review (Nayar 2013) provides “three tests that will help you decide if you’ve made the shift from managing people to leading them.” In this article, leadership involves creating value, expanding one’s circles of influence (i.e. over people outside the formal hierarchy), and the ability to motivate and enable others. In contrast, management is characterized as counting value, employing lines of power (i.e. formal reporting structures), and controlling others with more traditional authority. The article claims that “influence and inspiration separate leaders from managers, not power and control.” The Wall Street Journal Guide to Management sets up a similar contrast between leadership and management – leaders innovate versus imitate, disrupt the status quo versus accept it, advance originality versus play good soldier, do the right thing versus doing things right, focus on people rather than systems and structure, inspire trust rather than exercise control, and keep an eye on the horizon rather than the bottom line (Murray 2010). Hyper-managers are charismatic, innovative entrepreneurs and leaders, while regular managers are guardians of routines.

The distinction between charismatic and mundane management is not new (Mintzberg 1973), but the celebrated features of cutting-edge leadership have expanded and changed in recent decades. Popular models are infused with the new hyper-managerial spirit, such as “transformational leadership” (for early formulations see Burns 1978 and Bass 1985; later, Bass 1990; Bass & Riggio 2006). More recent themes become even more hyper-managerial, with the growth of approaches like “distributed leadership”, “collaborative leadership”, and “emotional leadership”, which emphasize dispersed and horizontal forms of authority and holistic attunement to team members’ specific skills and needs (Humphrey 2002; Hallinger & Heck 2010; Harris 2009; Spillane 2012; Goleman et al 2013).

1 One older form of leadership was rooted in ideas of the powerful ‘great man’ sitting at the top of bureaucracies, holding a great deal of authority and/or power (Borgatta et al 1954; Wart 2003). Alternative forms advocated technical, scientific systems and narrowly rational incentives, sometimes called ‘transactional leadership’ (e.g. Bass 1990; Kuhnert & Lewis 1987), ‘managerial leadership’, or ‘scientific management’.
Our account, rooted in neoinstitutional theory, attributes recent changes in ideologies of exemplary leadership to cultural shifts. Liberal and neo-liberal societal trends have led to the expanded construction of individuals and organizations as purposive social actors (Meyer 2010) - bounded and sovereign decision-making entities surrounded by other empowered actors. The expansion of actorhood generates change along two dimensions. First, as empowered actors, individuals and organizations have greatly expanded arenas for “choice” and “decision” in the creation of social progress: By cultural fiat, they can and should work to create desired outcomes in the world. Thus, there is an explosion of emphases on entrepreneurship, intrapreneurship, and innovation in all spheres of life and at all levels of the organizational hierarchy (Mair & Marti 2006; Davis & White 2015; Alt & Craig 2016). Second, hyper-managers lead other empowered actors, not subordinates. At the extreme, they even enable former subordinates to become leaders. Thus, old leadership/followership dichotomies erode (DeRue & Ashford 2010) and the focus is on “soft” interpersonal skills more than the formal chain of command or substantive expertise.

Conceptions of organizational management have expanded and undergone fundamental shifts before the recent emergence of hyper-management. Early in the history of the corporation, powerful ‘titans of industry’ (alternatively, ‘robber barrons’) founded, owned and exercised imperative authority over central businesses in society (Mizruchi & Marshall 2016). These business leaders were attributed with charisma, social standing, and immense power; at least through the nineteenth century, ‘great man’ theories of leadership were central (Carlyle 1841/2013; Wart 2003). Later, starting especially in the 1920s, the rise of scientific approaches produced some taming of imperative authority (Shenhav 2002), and contemporary models of the organization-as-actor began to replace older models of the bureaucracy as servant to an external sovereign (Bromley & Meyer 2015). Management emerged as its own professional category in the twentieth century (Sahlin-Anderssson & Engwall 2002; Khurana 2010), increasingly recognized as expertise with specialized knowledge about making firms run efficiently and effectively (Chandler 1993; Taylor 2004). To a degree, managerial professionals, aided by the rise of business schools, gained the authority associated with expertise in the traditional professions. As a result, owners had less control over managers (including top executives: Berle & Means 1991). Long-term organizational expansion continued this growth and transformation of managerial authority: extensive literatures discuss the implications (e.g. Mason 1958; Fligstein 1993; Mizruchi & Marshall 2016).

---

2In some views, managers at all levels act as stewards, using their specialized professional knowledge to work in the firms’ best interest (e.g. stewardship theory, see Davis et al 1997). In others, managers are seen as self-interested agents using expertise to seek gain by exploiting information asymmetries (Bebchuk & Fried 2005, Sørensen 2000), thus requiring incentives to align their interests with principals (Jensen & Meckling 1976; for a review see Eisenhardt 1989). Beyond firms, political science and public administration ideas emphasize these principal-agent problems in all sorts of structures (e.g. Weingast 1984; Cook & Wood 1989). Bridging all these views, Barley and Kunda (1992) propose that at a societal level, there are historical waves of managerial fads that vasculate between normative and rational approaches to management.
These canonical accounts capture the overall expansion of management as profession and ideology of which hyper-management is an expansion. But sociological imageries tend to depict rather rational action with little analysis of the cultural content of dominant leadership models. Management strategies are assumed to stem from pre-existing resource dependencies and politics (e.g. executives aim to meet shareholder demands or maximize employee productivity). Little attention is given to changes that are hard to explain via coercive power or function. Theory tends to underemphasize the role of transformed culture, and overemphasizes rational, scientific action and a priori individual interests (Wachhaus 2014). But we need to consider why changes to these conditions themselves occur (e.g. why being environmentally friendly or providing a snack bar for employees comes to be seen as a way to maximize profit or productivity).

In sum, we develop an understanding of the distinct features of contemporary hyper-management (as opposed to mundane management and older models of leadership), and account for the emergence and expansion of these new features. In what follows we spell out our causal arguments before elaborating two main dimensions of hyper-management. We then discuss directions for future empirical research as hyper-management becomes institutionalized through an array of educational and training programs, the business media, and academic fields. We conclude by reflecting on the core consequences for organizations and society.

Sources of Hyper-Management

The cultural bases of contemporary hyper-management stem most immediately from the rise of aggressive neoliberalism starting in the 1980s and taking off especially in the 1990s. As an ideology neoliberalism has broad social, cultural, and political implications far beyond the standard economic dimensions. With the fall of the Soviet Union, there was no global challenge to liberal, market-based visions for structuring national societies or an expanding international system. The capitalist democracy model had been dominant since the second World War (Djelic 1996), and now became central to a rapidly expanding and interdependent global society that had reached, in some formulations, “the end of history” (Fukuyama 1992). In this model, the primordial authority of nation-states, already weakened substantially as a result of the disasters of the first half of the twentieth century, was further undercut (Rhodes 1994). Governance comes to involve a collection of agencies akin to organizations that should be efficient and effective (Christensen & Lægreid 2006). Centralized state control was seen as an unwelcome disruption of market efficiency; and at times as a menacing source of oppression and corruption. World progress was to be achieved through the rational choices of individuals and the organizations they freely built, rather than through state-led development. A period of naïve

---

3 For an exception, see the series of studies by Dobbin and colleagues on diversity practices in US firms (e.g. Kalev et al 2006, Dobbin et al 2011).

4 Of course, neoliberalism itself emerges from an older liberal tradition involving the expansion of the rights and perceived capabilities of individuals (Elliott 2007; Lauren 2011) – most dramatically including the empowered capacity to organize. But older liberal traditions retained a more “embedded” flavor (Ruggie 1982), and a suspicion of the dangers of private organization. Since the end of World War II more types of people become endowed with more rights (e.g. on grounds of gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, language, age). The rights shifted focus from passive entitlements linked to the nation-state to active political, economic, and social equalities belonging to all humans (Marshall 1964; Stacy 2009). Especially in recent decades, belief in the human capability to rationally plan and control progress on all fronts —economic, political, social — expanded. To institutionalize the faith involved,
The celebration of neoliberalism was characterized by a rapid reconstruction (real and perceived) of organizations, individuals, and all sorts of stakeholders as purposive, autonomous, and sovereign actors. Combined with the absence of real alternatives (such as a world state), this materially shaped contemporary models of both organization and management (Bromley & Meyer 2015).

**Individual and Organizational Actorhood**

Under neoliberal cultural assumptions, empowered and rational individuals, rather than divine powers or more involuntary collectives such as nation-states and kinship groupings, came to be seen as the constitutive units of society. As individuals voted and consumed and produced without interference, their legitimate choices would aggregate into optimally functioning economies and government policies. Individuals were re-envisioned and re-constructed (e.g. through expanding levels of education) as rational and responsible actors (Meyer & Jepperson 2000). The contemporary postmodern individual is an exceptionally empowered actor – able and entitled to pursue interests on a global scale (Boli & Thomas 1997; Frank & Meyer 2002; Elliott 2007).

The grandeur involved in expanded ideas of human capability, and the newfound import of individual choice and decision as driving progress, push management in a hyper direction. Frenetic efforts around what we now call innovation and entrepreneurship -- once looked upon with great suspicion – become highly celebrated (Mair & Marti 2006; Pol & Ville 2009). Even “disruption” becomes a good thing and reaches up to global levels. “We are all entrepreneurs” is a rallying cry heard everywhere from Muhammad Yunus talking about microloan operations in poverty-stricken Bangladesh to business media like *Forbes* discussing unfettered American capitalism (Pozen 2008; DeCarolis 2014; Cosic 2017). The men and women of Davos aim to improve the state of the whole world through co-creation and collaboration (World Economic Forum Website 2018). This, formerly hubris and fantasy, comes to be seen as purposive and responsible social action.

As all progress becomes envisioned as a product of rational human efforts, organized goal-directed action takes a more central role in theory and society. “Organizations” emerge as the distinctive social structures built by individuals steeped in liberal cultural assumptions of choice and actorhood (Kruecken and Meier 2006; Ahrne and Brunsson 2008; Hwang and Colyvas 2011). Private for-profit and non-profit organizations proliferate at an unprecedented rate worldwide. Earlier bureaucratic, associational, and professional forms become transformed into modern formal, managed organizations. Businesses have exploded in number worldwide (Ayyagari et al 2007; Roach 2007). Voluntary associations increase and become registered as formal nonprofit organizations in countries around the world (Schofer & Longhofer 2011). And with “new public management” and “new public governance” doctrines, even states are seen as

---

5 This valorization of neoliberalism now looks unrealistic: even the mainstream economists that aggressively pushed such values via the World Bank and International Monetary Fund report that the benefits of neoliberal capitalism have been “oversold” (Ostry, Loungani & Furceri 2016).
organizations requiring business-like processes, managers, and “public entrepreneurs” (Hood 1995; Terry 1998; Osborne 2010).

Organizations are distinct from pre-cursor forms such as bureaucracies or associations. They have expanded in all forms in the recent era (Bromley & Meyer 2015; Bromley & Sharkey 2017). As others have observed, “although there are many differences between collectivities like factories, prisons, and government agencies, they share one important thing in common: they are all organizations” (Maguire, 2003: 1). The central defining element of “organization,” as contrasted with bureaucracy, is the legitimated capacity and responsibility to make decisions (Brunsson 1990, 2007; March 1994; Luhmann 2005). And as organizational models expand into arenas of uncertainty, ambiguity, and inconsistency a much wider array of “decisions” can and must be made. Organizations become hyper-organizations, coordinating both clear functional relationships and very opaque ones, and incorporating empowered professionalized actors rather than more passive employees (Bromley & Meyer 2015). Hyper-organizations go beyond the routine administration of activities around clearly defined and unitary functions – for instance, the coordination of production or sales activities, or the orderly and stable supervision of assembly lines. Routine management becomes hyper-management to integrate unclearly related activities, and professionalized actors. For instance, an organization might “need” someone who knows about environmental standards in order to be properly green. Or it might require a Chief Inclusion Officer or Chief Diversity Officer to spearhead equity initiatives. Then hyper-management is required to envision how the environmental or diversity roles might relate to other units, or to an organizational bottom line.

As organizations expand and become actors, notions of rationalized management far beyond routine, scientific administration arise – becoming hyper-management. It becomes necessary to create, or at least imagine, managerial roles of greatly expanded competence, authority, and capability. The intensive discussion of executive management as something very special pervades theoretical and practical talk about organizations. For instance, a great deal of research focuses on ‘top management teams’, ‘upper echelons’, or CEOs, assuming there is something distinctive about those at the top (e.g. Hambrick and Mason 1984; Finkelstein 1992; Amason 1996; Hambrick 2007; Finkelstein et al 2009). While one older vision of management involves rational, scientific approaches to improve the number of widgets produced per hour (a rather straightforwardly observed outcome), hyper-management involves the rationalized invention of uncertain measures of complex concepts (e.g. employee satisfaction) and theorization of how new concepts relate to existing goals (e.g. how employee satisfaction links to a bottom-line, or how certain corporate social responsibility practices link to share price or reputation). So the dramatic organizational expansions of the recent neo-liberal period generate visions of hyper-management.

**Actorhood of Internal and External Stakeholders**

Unlike bureaucracy or association, modern organization – and organization theory – are directly built around notions of actorhood and decision (March 1994; Scott 2014; Bromley and Meyer 2015). Social structures increasingly take the form of empowered actors, reflecting the increased status of the individuals who create them (Bromley & Sharkey 2017). With the expansion of individual and organizational actorhood, internal and external stakeholders expand in number.
and authority (Donaldson & Preston 1995; Freeman et al 2010), creating complexity in the institutional environment (Greenwood et al 2012). When stakeholders are perceived to be legitimated actors, management must take their interests into account.

Thus, hyper-management expands because the expanding actorhood of internal and external stakeholders creates a growing set of concerns for leaders to deal with -- and actors must be handled differently than less empowered constituents. Hyper-managers can and should weigh other actors’ goals as both a moral imperative (i.e. because it is normatively valued to show respect and equal treatment for others) and as a socially-constructed instrumental force. If stakeholders are empowered actors, they might do something consequential if their interests or rights are ignored.

Internally, there is a re-imagining of employees as actors. For example, in 2017 Ben Congleton, CEO of a private and relatively small software company called Olark, was celebrated in news headlines around the world for responding positively to an employee’s message asking for two days off to “focus on [her] mental health.” Congleton replied, “‘Hey Madalyn, I just wanted to personally thank you for sending emails like this. Every time you do, I use it as a reminder of the importance of using sick days for mental health — I can’t believe this is not standard practice at all organizations. You are an example to us all, and help cut through the stigma so we can all bring our whole selves to work” (Dishman 2017). A hyper-manager embraces a holistic vision of employees and other actors, and takes their actual or potential goals seriously; for instance, they should formally support employees’ myriad identities and hobbies in firm-based affinity groups. Employee resource groups (ERGs) are on the rise (Briscoe & Safford 2010; Welbourne, Rolf & Schlachter 2015). Employees and clients become partners and collaborators, entitled to be recognized as having their own legitimate goals: they can become social intrapreneurs requiring hyper-management to hold the organization together (Davis & White 2015; Alt & Craig 2016).

Externally, hyper-managers show attention to a wide range of issues often linked to participation in movements for corporate social responsibility such as: environmental impact, human and natural disasters, local community relations, and employee and customer satisfaction and safety (Lim & Tsutsui 2012). For example, university leaders now routinely produce press releases that not only share accomplishments related to core activities of teaching and learning, but also public positions on major events. In August 2017 the University of Pennsylvania released the following “Statement from Penn President Amy Gutmann regarding the demonstration in Charlottesville”: “The racism, anti-Semitism, and other bigotry expressed by the neo-Nazi, KKK and other white supremacist groups that demonstrated in Charlottesville are deeply abhorrent and call for universal condemnation. The hatred espoused is inimical to any decent society and anathema to the most fundamental ideals of our University” (University of Pennsylvania Website 2017). Similar to Gutmann and many other executives, Apple CEO Tim Cook responded to events in Charlottesville. Cook stated, "I disagree with the president and others who believe that there is a moral equivalence between white supremacists and Nazis, and those who oppose them by standing up for human rights. Equating the two runs counter to our ideals as Americans." He further announced several Apple-supported charitable actions, including donating $1 million each to the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Anti-Defamation League, describing them as
groups working "to rid our country of hate" (Pham 2017). Hyper-managers should have an expansive vision of the organization’s role as interconnected with society.

In sum, globalized (neo)liberalism creates an expanded range of social actors. Huge numbers of people acquire schooling, and are attributed with empowerment and rationality; they build social structures – organizations – reflecting these expanded attributes. Often by law, organizations themselves are increasingly conceived and legitimated as autonomous actors, rather than networks or a set of contractual agreements (Brunsson and Sahlin-Andersson 2000; Kruecken and Meier 2006; King, Felin Whetten 2010; Pollman 2011). The world comes to be filled with actual and potential actors – individual and collective stakeholders of all sorts, legitimately representing a growing range of interests. There are consumers, suppliers, communities – and professional representatives of the natural environment, multiple dimensions of human rights, and demands for transparency and accountability. Thus there is an “increasing prevalence” of multi-logic or hybrid organizations (Pache & Santos 2010: 471; Battilana & Lee 2014; Bromley & Meyer 2015, 2017). With all these changes, something much bigger than routine administrative management and imperative authority is required.

Dimensions of Hyper-Management

Hyper-management is characterized by two main dimensions. First, vision becomes central. Vision is needed to set goals, which are now the choices of organized actors. Vision is also needed to decide how to rationally achieve and integrate goals – means and ends must be calculated in light of perceptions of other actors’ rights and goals rather than pursued single-mindedly. Decision-making far beyond the limits of rationality is required. Second, direct managerial control and formal lines of power are compromised. Coordinating all the now-empowered actors in internal and external environments is seen to require leadership capability over and above authority.

Vision: decision-making beyond rationality

The proper hyper-manager carries a greatly expanded vision of organizational purposes and the means to accomplish them. Innovation, entrepreneurship, plans, designs, strategies, creativity, and change-making constitute this vision, transcending the ordinary accomplishment of obvious or established goals. Because the expanded hyper-organization incorporates collateral social functions (e.g., deriving from human rights, the environment, or obligations to expanded arrays of stakeholders), it is not enough to simply try to be a good university or firm or agency. Something more is required. Hyper-managerial vision involves creating both sides of a complex causal equation – not just given outcomes, but innovative ones; and not just obvious means, but second and third order calculations of how other actors’ goals fit in and get accounted for. The imagined technical core becomes constructed around a vision of what can be achieved, rather than as a simple factual reflection of assembly-line processes.

Vision is stabilized by an obsession with data and measurement: measures of input, output, outcomes, and impact, and of participant performance and satisfaction proliferate. An organization can now calculate the benefits of free fruit juice for its employees as well as the value of training employees about proper diet. In nonprofit organizations, elaborate ‘theories of
change’ and ‘logic models’ become the gold standard for steering the organizational ship (Funnell & Rogers 2011). This expanded application of quasi-scientific methods to organizational administration is more a means of governance than obvious functional calculations (Foucault 1991; Miller & Rose 2008). With the elaboration of invented causal relationships and measurement, commensuration renders activities as visible and concrete, bringing them under control. Financial accounting, for example, now has a relatively more institutionalized rule structure that can be followed by trained accountants. It has become routinized. But accounting for social responsibility can, for now, still come in many forms and be measured in a range of acceptable ways. Before institutionalization as routine management, vision is required to imagine how all the parts fit together, and contribute to some shared purpose.6

Leadership: control beyond authority

With hyper-organization, there is an expansion of internal and external roles and identities to be dealt with. Contemporary organizations are filled with empowered actors, and surrounded by stakeholders, who are now also constructed as organized actors. Coordinating actors is like “herding cats.” It should not be accomplished through hard power and authority: diffuse influence, and the capacity to bring together the disparate interests of a range of legitimated actors becomes crucial. Vision matters as a technical issue for what the organization will do, but the skilled hyper-manager must also inspire others around the vision as a primary source of authority.

The imagined charisma of executives, always present throughout the history of bureaucracy and organization, appears in an expanded form. There is a great increase in the domains considered to require top-level expertise, as seen in the expansion of the c-suite (Svejenova et al 2017), types of executive roles, and executive education. And managing an array of c-suite people requires even higher levels of “leadership.” In a hyper-managerial leadership model, executives inspire and empower employees, rather than monitor and assign tasks.

Many qualities involved are imagined as deeply personal, and there is a proliferation of courses and conferences to provide leadership guidance with a quasi-spiritual flavor promoting self-discovery. For example, the business school INSEAD offers an online executive education course in “Leadership Communication with Impact.” The executive will learn to understand “a personal communication style. . . in the process discovering more about” him/herself. Stanford business and engineering programs include courses like “Very Impactful People,” “From Play to Innovation,” or “Hacking Your Innovation Mindset.” Leadership comes to require an internal journey as much as rationally assessing external demands; values and self-awareness can provide answers when there is no obvious functional resolution to the myriad demands.

6 With hyper-organization and hyper-management, the role of measurement takes on an increasingly constitutive role in constructing organizations. Whereas measurement in scientific management is assumed to straightforwardly capture an objective reality, in hyper-managerial settings what we choose to measure and how we choose to measure it comes to constitute entities and create a “reality” rather than reflect an objective truth that exists independent of its observation (Astley 1985). Accountants have long noted the constitutive role of their craft (e.g. Hopwood & Miller 994; Preston et al 1996; Kurunmaki 1999), and this role becomes increasingly central in the contemporary era.
There is a general expansion in the attribution of capability for managerial leadership throughout the employee chain as many individuals gain an empowered status (Elliott 2007). An ideal employee should be seeking maximum professional growth and taking initiative rather than following orders. For example, an entry-level job description for a coding position at Houston Methodist Hospital in Texas requires “typing at least 40 words per minute” and a two-year associate degree. It also contains a section of features called “Growth/Innovation” noting that the potential hire: “Displays initiative to improve relative to job function. Contributes ideas to help improve quality of coding data and abstracting data” (Indeed.com Website 2017). Thus, even technical, entry-level employees are expected to lead organizational improvement. As another example, a recent posting for a Director of Global Food Programs at Google is tasked with “creating food experiences that promote collaboration and engage and energize Googlers each and every day” (see Figure 1). As stated in the posting, the right person needs to be a “great communicator who is comfortable taking on complex projects with a diverse set of stakeholders” who can “lead multiple complex, cross-functional global projects.” The Director will be “working closely with global stakeholders and business leaders, as well as vendor partners, industry experts and thought leaders to define and deliver high impact projects and programs, inspiring and mobilizing your team to deliver impact for all of REWS and Google.”

[Figure 1. Job Posting for Director, Global Food Programs at Google]

As organizational process, core decision-making rhetorics become increasingly participatory. A widely-used template for non-routine decisions (e.g., vision planning or major policy changes), solicits broad based input from all levels of an organization (see, for example, practical handbooks providing advice to managers such as Wellins 1991). The hyper-manager is to synthesize and prioritize information into a clear vision, and motivate participants around it.

Much of the practitioner literature now valorizes the claim that everyone can become a leader if they develop extraordinary “soft” skills of inspiration and persuasion: “Person not position” is one common mantra (Quinn 1996; DeRue & Ashford 2010). For example, an industry blog post for mid-level compliance and ethics officers discusses how they can be successful if they develop “superpowers”, showing a picture of a man in a suit with a cape (see Figure 2). The powers include convincing top management to keep the organization going in “the right direction” and being able to “take over other people’s minds,” claiming “much of the job is about the ability to persuade, even to persuade adversaries” (Turteltaub 2015). Hyper-management includes the possibility of influencing upward on the traditional organizational chart. Along the same lines, a Forbes article proposes that, “everyone is a leader, and everyone is CEO of his or her career” (Ryan 2016). These sentiments are echoed in other sectors as well, a nonprofit career development and employment website advises:

Leadership doesn’t mean having a fancy title and lots of supervisees. Leaders stand out not only for their individual contributions, but also for their ability to inspire others, create a sense of community, and to help organizations weather difficult storms. Opportunities to lead are everywhere, and can be taken advantage of from any part of an organization (Kane 2014).
Related, there is a shift from hierarchical to participatory decision-making, described as a movement towards more democratic organization (Battilana et al 2016), or as the delegation of “voice rights” (Turco 2016) and “decision rights” (Kerr 2004; Hsieh 2005; Moriarty 2010). Participatory decision-making processes can be mainly symbolic, aimed at generating buy-in for pre-made decisions. But gathering information from a range of stakeholders, it is argued, can lead to optimal decision-making. The distinction between symbolic or more realistic practices is less important for our purposes. In either case, they involve the expansion of hyper-management – participatory processes that respect a wide range of actors both in terms of requiring their cooperation and envisioning their views as valuable.

**Discussion**

These observations help resolve a puzzle in contemporary management theory: why we see the combination of expanding CEO pay in the face of reduced autonomy (Mizruchi & Marshall 2016). The outsized salaries of top executives tend to be seen as reflecting their power and self-interest, as research has trouble finding functional reasons to explain their exotic pay. In some cases, evidence even suggests negative consequences when ‘CEO superstars’ are distracted from their work by maintaining a public persona, or embracing tendencies towards narcissism and excessive risk-taking (Khurana 2002a, 2002b; Malmendier & Tate 2009). Beyond raw power it is useful to consider the cultural meanings involved. Massive salaries reflect and reinforce the notion that something very special goes on in managerial roles. They are payments to the gods of rational action under conditions when actual rationality is implausible. Roles to which leadership and vision are assigned, under conditions of actual opaqueness, are thus paid unreasonably. As management expands from narrow foci on efficiency and effectiveness to broader postures of vision and leadership, attributed charisma increases (as does pay), even though the scope for actual fully autonomous action may decrease.

Although new leadership models are painted as the path to organizational salvation, it is difficult to justify hyper-managerial trends in simple instrumental terms. As an example, consider the case of corporate social responsibility. For one thing, in firms there is an ambiguous link between many forms of corporate social responsibility and profit (Endrikat et al 2014). For another, such emphases spread beyond firms to the nonprofit world where organizations already pursue a social mission (Pope et al, forthcoming). Additionally, in a performative twist (e.g. Mackenzie 2008), even if a link between corporate responsibility and bottom-line profits comes to exist over time, one cause is the changing cultural context defining what organizations should do rather than an inherent relationship between social responsibility and profit.

Moreover, the expanded actorhood of hyper-management creates new problems. In a recent news report, Lamm (2017) warns of the volatility and potential dangers of an economy overly

---

7 For example, drawing on her ethnography of a small software firm, Turco (2016) asserts: “Conversational firms differ from old-school bureaucratic ones by having a far more open communication environment. They [executives] delegate voice rights throughout the organization, encouraging all employees to speak up...And the result of all that is an ongoing conversation that transcends the firm’s formal hierarchical structure, leading to more engaged workers and an organization that is able to tap into its entire collective wisdom.”
populated with start-ups, “We shouldn’t want everyone to be an entrepreneur. It’s not about separating the professionals from the amateurs, either. It’s about responsible approaches to economic growth and societal change.” As another example, hyper-managerialism undercuts any clear organizational chart and thus requires strong social controls and self-disciplining for cohesion. When these controls break down, turmoil ensues. As a recent example, Google has long encouraged open employee discussion through its message boards, similar to the principles of openness and voice described in Turco’s “conversational firm” (2016). As of 2017, there were about 87,000 Google discussion groups to allow employees to express themselves, criticize products or policies, or protest decisions by management. But, as reported in the *New York Times*, encouraging participation can create a new managerial problem and calls into question the instrumental value of ‘tapping into collective wisdom’ to create better workers:

A crisis unfurled at Google over an employee memo that argued biological factors helped explain the shortage of female engineers and leaders in Silicon Valley. The company’s decision to fire James Damore, a software engineer who wrote the contentious memo on company message boards, has angered some employees who view his dismissal as a betrayal of this open-discourse culture. Google said he had crossed the line ‘by advancing harmful gender stereotypes’ and many employees were upset about the views outlined in the memo….Mr. Damore said the company’s biases created ‘a politically correct monoculture that maintains its hold by shaming dissenters into silence’ (Wakabayashi 2017).

Beyond questions of effectiveness, hyper-managerial visions raise issues of justice and equality. For example, while explicit coercion is illegitimated in the hyper-managerial model, strong social controls may be intensified. As another example, it seems obvious that the spirit of hyper-management is used to justify the extreme income inequalities in income in the contemporary organizational world. Further, the universalism of hyper-management constructs a global elitism out of touch with local and national realities, as in Huntington’s critiques of the “Davos Man” (2004).

In the neoliberal period, hyper-management is part of a long term expansion of organization and management, and the hyper and mundane aspects can support each other. Visionary but ambiguous goal setting and attainment activities come to be routinized in expanded organizational structure – as with planning or strategy or innovation programs. Hyper-managerial vision involves integrating an expanded organizational structure that reflects multiple goals and pressures; routinization and institutionalization help tame and control the uncertainties, making them part of standard management. The business schools expand, frequently emphasizing quantified methods of decision-making built around financialized or other quantified technologies. Vision planning is routinized and even charismatic hyper-management leadership involving the empowerment of self and others is taught as a professionalization matter. One can now take charisma-improvement classes, and hire the services of a range of executive coaches for support.
Research Directions

It is possible to study the rise of hyper-managerialism in manifestations such as elite executive education, the guru literature, or consulting systems that help generate the expanded and creative self. Vision of purpose and leadership appear most clearly in aspirational discourse such as educational curricula or documents outlining intended goals; some empirical settings are outlined in Table 1. Diffusion and institutionalization reflect classic processes such as copying peers perceived to be doing well, and professional influence, through executive education programs, consulting firms, and the business guru literature (DiMaggio & Powell 1983; Sahlin-Andersson & Engwall 2002). Our arguments lead to several testable hypotheses about where we might observe hyper-managerial claims.

1. Overall in societies, we expect indicators of hyper-management --
   a. Expand worldwide, especially in the recent neoliberal decades.8
   b. Expansion is also likely to be greater in countries – like the Anglo-American ones – more closely tied to high liberal models. There are substantial cross-national differences in how much CEOs matter (Crossland & Hambrick 2011).

2. At the level of specific organizations and organizational roles, we expect hyper-managerial imagery should be affected by a number of variables.
   a. Expansion should be associated with increased levels of organizational complexity and differentiation. Simpler and more traditional organizational structures may emphasize the organizational chart rather than entrepreneurial vision and dramatic leadership.
   b. Expansion should also be greater with expanded actorhood of internal and external stakeholders, indicated for example by average levels of education and professionalization in an organization, industry or society.

[Table 1. Illustrative research settings]

As with any cultural ideology, hyper-management can have substantial consequences across many levels of social structure even if it is highly decoupled from practice. Our focus has been mainly on the emergence and content of hyper-management as culture. But research can also examine when and where it emerges in practice -- and consider its effects. There are continua of decoupling of practical manifestations from ideals, and of the intended benefits of hyper-managerialism and actual consequences (Meyer & Rowan 1977; Bromley & Powell 2012). The expansive imagery of hyper-management may have positive organizational effects under environmental conditions supporting growth and expansion (Barley & Kunda 1992). But the general posture may also be associated with costly behaviors, like narcissism and extreme risk taking, which have negative effects under more constrained political and economic conditions (Fligstein 1993).

---

8 And it would be reasonable to argue that they may decline in more recent years with rising anti-liberalism.
Concluding Comments

The recent neo-liberal period has generated a greatly expanded model of management, rooted in elaborated conceptions of the capacities and responsibilities of individual human actors. Assembled in organizations these participants bring their capacity for choice and decision—animating organizations but also creating expanded hyper-management to produce integration and purpose. Hyper-management arises as a cultural theory of participatory integration and collective action.9

The hyper-manager has abstract and universal qualities—a good one can hyper-manage anything anywhere. Concrete knowledge and experience are replaced by formal measures, rules, and procedures along with a creative depiction of how it all might fit together: the manager of a paper company may no longer need to know what a tree is. The Director of Google’s Food Programs, from our earlier example, needs experience in strategy, marketing, operations or as a management consultant: understanding food is optional. Hyper-organization—the integration of opaque supra-functional relationships—takes this abstraction to a more extreme level: the paper company, under neoliberal conditions, may no longer make paper.

In an older world the various distinctive social forms—families, churches, tribes, charities, universities, businesses, or government agencies—were seen as incommensurate. Strategies used in one domain made no sense in another. But transformed into standardized organizations, and even more into hyper-organizations, everything is rendered comparable (Bromley & Meyer 2017). Today, one can discuss a modern hyper-organization with little understanding of what it does. A feature of hyper-management is its universalistic application to organizations in all sectors of society.

The rhetoric of hyper-management, even if decoupled from practice, can have consequences for organizations. It can encourage risky expressions of imagined organizational identities. There is little evidence that CEO superstars in fact generate positive effects (Khurana 2002b; Malmendier & Tate 2009). Further, the expectations associated with the expanded cultural model of hyper-management generate stresses, as managers posture in heroic C-suite molds: the liberal society is famously an engine of anxiety rather than depression or modesty (Espeland & Sauder 2016).10 Thus, hyper-management is an unstable resolution in itself, without routinization in more legitimated organizational structures. The claims associated with the posture have obvious legitimacy problems: it is easy to reconceive heroes as villains or fools (Klapp 1962).

---

9 Hyper-management should decline under conditions where neoliberalism is weaker. Growing waves of populism and rollbacks in democracy worldwide suggest we may be entering such an era. Hyper-managerial ideology may decline if neoliberalism unravels as the core global code.

10 More centralized systems of social control can generate, under some institutional conditions, as much efficiency and effectiveness as a social order of empowered individuals making exaggerated claims (Kornberger et al 2017).
List of Sources


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1. Illustrative research settings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Executive education</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the same way that the expanded array of rather standardized business schools in the world reflects basic managerialism and expanded organizational structures everywhere, expanded elite executive education schemes reflect the special status of the hyper-manager. These educational arrangements tend, in the recent period, to celebrate leadership and entrepreneurial vision: many executive education programs offer programs in both routine administration and more glamorous hyper-management. Instruction goes far beyond valuing managerial effectiveness, and emphasizes the development of the self and the capacity for innovation and change. A study can examine both the expansion of executive education, and changes in its content over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>General administrative education</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The properties of hyper-managerialism show up, similarly, in the expanding curricula of ordinary education, too. Over time, departments have expanded beyond the most traditional core areas. In the current period, programs explicitly structured around “leadership,” and “entrepreneurship” or “innovation” grow and diffuse. Certainly, these emphases expand in business schools, but increasingly they may also be found in programs on public policy, public administration, and education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job descriptions</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inside organizations, job definitions and announcements change in the recent decades, as workers are re-imagined as partly hyper-managerial. Any role depiction becomes more likely to emphasize both leadership and capacity for creative innovation, even for roles that were formerly seen as routine. In the contemporary world, integration and innovation are to come from persons, not structures. More and more jobs are depicted as requiring higher order skills, suitable for empowered actors, and illustrate the need to include the interests of other stakeholders. Emphases on technical effectiveness may decline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Consulting tasks</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The widespread expansion of consulting arrangements has often been noted. The arguments here suggest that increasingly such arrangements focus, not on technical improvements in organizations, but on hyper-managerial issues: coordinating and integrating systems now filled with legitimated “actors,” and constructing broad visions of organizational meaning and purpose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Guru literature</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Throughout the short history of managerialism, hortatory literatures have been prominent. Guru books have increased over time, and increasingly focus on hyper-managerial issues: leading people, finding ones inner creativity and entrepreneurship, and so on. If everyone can and should be a leader, then everyone might be interested to read how to be a leader. Similarly, if creative entrepreneurship is at issue, books on creativity should do well. In contrast, advice on instrumental effectiveness might decline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic literature</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In the same way, the more academic business literature seems increasingly to attend to the core dimensions of hyper-managerialism. Innovation and entrepreneurship get much celebratory attention. And so do the qualities associated with “leadership.” Concerns with traditional managerial roles – organizational efficiency and effectiveness, for example – seem to get less attention than in the past.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 1. Compliance officer superpowers

Source: Turteltaub 2015.
Google operates on a global scale, but each office seeks to emulate the same Googley feel of our Mountain View, California home base. As a Workplace Service Program Manager, you build consistent, outstanding workplace experiences around the world. You design, implement and manage Google’s service offerings. You’re a great communicator who is comfortable taking on complex projects with a diverse set of stakeholders. You believe that great isn’t good enough. You bring an analytical mind to constantly improve the efficiency and efficacy of your projects, from building new workplace tools and applications to mergers and acquisitions. You get satisfaction from knowing your clients are happy, healthy and productive, and are excited about joining a fast-paced, collaborative team that is reinventing what a workplace can be.

In this role, you will oversee a team of subject matter experts and program owners to shape Google’s food program. You’ll directly lead multiple complex, cross-functional global projects. You’ll be working closely with global stakeholders and business leaders, as well as vendor partners, industry experts and thought leaders to define and deliver high impact projects and programs, inspiring and mobilizing your team to deliver impact for all of REWS and Google.

The Google Food team is responsible for creating food experiences that promote collaboration and engage and energize Googlers each and every day. With more global cafes serving over thousands of meals each day, the team works with a variety of partners and suppliers to provide delicious, nutritious food and innovative experiences to fuel Google’s culture. The Google Food team is also responsible for developing and managing programs that meet the diverse needs of our users, delivered through a broad portfolio of Cafes, MicroKitchens, Food Trucks, Events and more, while promoting a more sustainable future for all.

Just as Google products always focus on the user, Google offices focus on the Googler. From state-of-the-art green construction projects to maintaining our resident T. Rex skeleton (named Stan), the Real Estate and Workplace Services team builds environments that keep Googlers feeling inspired and energized. We’re a team of inquisitive and enthusiastic real estate, construction and facilities operations professionals that are constantly searching for new ways to improve workplace efficiency and make Google a great place to come to work everyday.

Responsibilities

- Lead a global team of subject matter experts focused on culinary, procurement, nutrition, health and wellness, resource utilization, marketing, brand, communications, food safety, risk management and vendor management. Define the team’s strategy and direction, coach and develop team members, remove roadblocks.
- Oversee strategic planning across the global program team and regional operations teams. Partner with operations teams and their leaders to define and align on priorities, evaluate and evolve deployed programs and initiatives and retire what no longer serves us.
- Develop and implement tools and processes that enable efficient program activation and compliance across a global, rapidly growing and evolving network, with built-in flexibility to adapt to regional and local preferences, requirements and regulatory contexts.
- Effectively prioritize across multiple projects, drawing on sound business judgment and a robust understanding of context and business goals and drive impact and execution by activating and influencing a global network of partners.
- Partner with the REWS Marketing & Communications team to lead and manage the Food program’s Marketing, Communications and Engagement strategies and develop creative strategies for communicating across a broad range of stakeholders, leading content, channels and campaigns that engage customers, clients, and collaborators.

Minimum Qualifications

- BA/BS degree in Business Management, Marketing, Hospitality, other relevant field or equivalent practical experience.
- 12 years of experience in a corporate strategy, operations, marketing role or in management consulting.

Preferred qualifications:

- Masters’ degree in a related field or equivalent practical experience.
- Experience leading complex operational and strategic initiatives, working closely with multiple global stakeholders at all levels to achieve impact. Distinctive problem-solving and analytical skills, combined with impeccable business judgment.
- Ability to create effective relationships, influence and collaborate internally and externally at all organizational levels. Experience leading global project teams and initiatives with multi-country stakeholders.
- Direct people management experience of a global team and experience activating projects, programs, and/or marketing and brand strategies in a diverse global landscape. Exceptional at leading an organization through change, with a proven track record of delivering impact.
- Expertise facilitating alignment across diverse stakeholders, enabling and accelerating change across a global and complex network. Outstanding communication skills that capture Google’s voice and cultural values across a range of channels and mediums.

Source: The Ladders Website 2018.