

## **OBTC Teaching Conference for Management Educators**

### **Title, abstract & keywords:**

Navigating the emotional currents of community change

The social phenomenon of change impacts a Universities psychological sense of community. This workshop introduces a new change model that positions emotions through a psychological sense of community lens. Participants will engage in an experiential ‘object mediated communication’ pedagogical approach that uses tangible visual images designed as psychosocial metaphors to enhance participant dialogue. Participants will externalize thinking, reflection, and sharing to help change how we talk about change. Participants will also have the opportunity to discuss how both the model and the pedagogical approach can be adapted and transferred across a variety of academic content and contexts.

Key words: Community leadership, change, emotions

### **Teaching implications:**

*What is the contribution of your session to management pedagogy/andragogy? Specifically, please include your learning objectives, and describe what management and/or teaching topics are relevant to your session, and why. Also, include theoretical, disciplinary, or theoretical foundations that will help reviewers understand how your ideas fit within the broader field of management.*

Higher education change efforts are very emotive events. How leaders understand, react, and respond to individual, team, group and University-wide emotions during periods of change have a direct impact on the collective psychological sense of community. Universities are in a continual state of progressive change and as such, University leaders need to be sensitive to individual and communal emotions that infuse institutional change processes. We argue, that change is an inherently emotional process requiring leaders to react with a sensitivity and awareness of the impact change has on the ‘psychological sense of community’ (PSOC) at both the individual campus level and the University community level. When leadership is understood as an emotional community development process, the benefits for positive growth potential are greatly enhanced.

The psychological sense of community (PSOC) concept was first identified by Sarason (1974) and later expanded upon by McMillan and Chavis (1986) and is defined as “a feeling that members have of belonging, a feeling that members matter to one another and to the group, and a shared faith that members’ needs will be met through their commitment to be together.” (p. 4).

While the literature in organizational change often refers to emotions as interfering with change, we assert a different perspective, one that embeds emotions throughout our four-stage model, entitled the ELIMAR model. This model adapts concepts originally presented in McMillan and Chavis’s (1986) psychological sense of community (PSOC) theory by integrating emotions and questions that managers and leaders can be aware of and sensitive to during change events. This model contributes to the field by expanding upon the theory and bringing it into another context. The purpose of this workshop is to broaden participant’s awareness of the 4-stage ELIMAR

change model through utilizing *object mediated communication* as an engaging experiential pedagogical approach to understanding the model.

Humans excel at visual imagery and object mediated dialogue capitalizes on this competency. The approach uses thought-provoking, visual images to facilitate insightful conversation and change the way we talk about change. The tangible visuals serve as psychosocial metaphors intended to help jump-start the conversation, advance the dialogue more quickly and candidly to a deeper level of meaning and shared understanding (Paulus & Drath, 2001). Pedagogical practices that draw upon metaphors often serve as authentic tools that help make student thinking visible (Gosselin & Meixner, 2015). Neuroscientist Dr. V.S. Ramachandran (2011) believes the use of metaphor and our ability to uncover hidden analogies is the basis of all creative thought.

As educators of emerging leaders, creative thought is fundamental to leading and managing change. Object mediated communication is particularly valuable in the context of leading change. Mediated dialogue often reduces institutional hierarchy where undiscussables can become more discussable, helping people connect across disciplines, roles, expertise, and experience. Even groups who have worked together can forge new connections when the images open up new language and ideas that may not have been previously communicated. The power of images and metaphors are part of the human emotional experience and this workshop is designed to highlight dialogue around the intersection of change and emotions.

The use of mediated dialogue and images is informed by the work of the Center for Creative Leadership (CCL®, <https://www.ccl.org>) and follows 3 steps: 1) Selecting an image and charging it with meaning; 2) Sharing the image and its meaning with others; 3) Opening the object and meaning to inquiry, which may include the construction of shared meaning.

Participants will have the opportunity to learn about the rationale and skills involved in the facilitative approach. Finally, participants will engage in discourse around the importance of the framing questions and the transferability and adaptability of the experiential tool/approach across academic content.

Workshop learning objectives:

- Articulate the importance of emotional sensitivity to a Universities psychological sense of community during change events.
- Become familiar with the characteristics of the four stages of the ELIMAR change model.
- Describe the rationale for, and transferability of object mediated communication activities.

### **Session Description and Plan:**

*What will you actually do in this session? If appropriate, please include a timeline estimating the activities will you facilitate: how long will they take, and how will participants be involved? Please remember that reviewers will be evaluating how well the time request matches the activities you'd like to do, and the extent you can reasonably accomplish the session's goals. Reviewers will also be looking for how you are engaging the participants in the session.*

### 60 Minute Workshop Outline:

Introductions and significance of Workshop	3 minutes
Workshop agenda and objectives	2 minutes
Lecturette: The Psychological Sense of Community framework and the ELIMAR change model	10 minutes
Experiential activity: Object mediated communication <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Introduce the activity</li><li>• Image selection</li><li>• Small group sharing</li><li>• Extended connections between participants for any shared meaning and understanding.</li></ul>	30 minutes
Debrief and discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• About the 4-stage ELIMAR model</li><li>• About object mediated communication</li><li>• Adaptability and transferability discussion</li></ul>	10 minutes
Resource sharing and conclusion	5 minutes

### Application to conference theme:

*How does your session fit with the overall OBTC theme of “Navigating the Changing Currents”?*

Our workshop session specifically deals with the concepts of institutional change. We present a model of change and an experiential approach easily adaptable and to a variety of contexts both inside and outside the classroom setting.

### Unique contribution to OBTC:

*Have you presented the work in this proposal before? If so, how will it be different? Is this proposal under current review somewhere else? If so, please explain. How will your proposal be different for the OBTC conference?*

This work has not been presented before and is not under current review somewhere else.

## References

- Gosselin, C. & Meixner, E. (2015). Blank canvas and glass ceiling: Using visual metaphors and narratives to examine preservice teacher development. *Multicultural Perspective, 17* (2) 73-80.
- McMillan, D. W., & Chavis, D. M. (1986). Sense of community: A definition and theory. *Journal of Community Psychology, 14*, 6–23.
- Paulus, C.J. & Drath, W. H. (2001). Putting something in the middle: An approach to dialogue. *Reflections, 3*(2), 28-39.
- Ramachandran, V.S. (2011). *The tell-tale brain*. New York: NY: W. W. Norton & Company.
- Sarason, S.B. (1974). *The psychological sense of community: Prospects for a community psychology*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.