

CONSTRUCTING A RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENTREPRENEURIAL LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL FLEXIBILITY

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PURPOSE

THIS theoretical study provides numerous contributions to the entrepreneurial leadership and organizational flexibility literature. This is due to two main crosscurrents in the business landscape: the plasticity of entrepreneurial leadership as a creator of a firm's competitive advantages and the ever changing, agile firm that competes in extremely unstable marketplace environments.

Design/Methodology/Approach: *The dimensions of organizational flexibility (i.e., competitiveness, operational, and strategic flexibility) are configured into a new theoretical framework. From this theoretical examination derived five future research questions that are hypothesized to be attributed to the transitional dynamics of flexibility. The barriers to organizational flexibility and the effects of entrepreneurial leadership are theoretically examined using the extant literature in these research areas.*

Findings: *Entrepreneurial leadership and organizational flexibility are hypothesized in this paper as being positively linked.*

Research Limitations: *Inherent in all human endeavors, this study is not without its limitations. This study's postulates and research questions are unique and directed to future research.*

Practical Implications: *Theoretical postulates and research questions are developed for future researchers to explore in this mosaic vineyard. Future research should approach these areas from the firm-level and individual-level of analysis to establish a full conception of the interplay between the individual and the firm.*

Originality/Value: *This theoretical framework is unique and has not been addressed or written about in the extant management, strategic leadership, and organizational literatures. Entrepreneurial leadership is explored historically and in its contemporary sui generis nature within the firm.*

Key Words: *Organizational Flexibility, Entrepreneurial Leadership, Entrepreneurship, Management.*

Introduction

Entrepreneurship and leadership are not synonymous, nor are they antithetical in producing results; but when fused, they form a driving force, entrepreneurial leadership (Renko, El Tarabishy, Carsrud, & Brännback, 2015). Leadership, in and of itself, is an influential and transformative mechanism between people and processes within the enterprise (Yukl, 2009). When entrepreneurship and leadership

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are able to flourish within the firm, it creates an internal climate of collaboration and effective use of ingenuity that sets off a trajectory of entrepreneurial-seeking goals (Child, 2015; Mintzberg, & Waters, 1985; Newman, Herman, Schwarz, & Nielsen, 2018). On the other end of the spectrum, organizational rigidity is the result of preservation and rooted in the stability paradigm (Mintzberg, 1990). There has been shifts away from organizational rigidity to a greater awareness of the benefits of organizational plasticity, changeability, and agility (Sharma, & Jain, 2010; Roberts, & Stockport, 2009; Volberda, 1998). At this theoretical cross-current between rigidity and flexibility, there must be an examination from an entrepreneurial leadership perspective illuminating the attributes, values, and characteristics of entrepreneurial leadership and the organizational behaviors that can overcome the barriers to organizational flexibility. Even Kanter (1983) categorized organizational barriers as bureaucratic traps and entrepreneurial traps. The entrepreneurial trap leads to single-minded push of ideas as the individual must be the source of new ideas (Kanter, 1983). Thus, flexibility has been viewed as a social condition and not a phenomenon an individual consequence. Entrepreneurial leadership is a set of attitudes and behaviors that can be set in motion by, but can also be constrained due to structure, communication, and policy. In this vein, entrepreneurship has been described as a dynamic and not a static decision-maker (Marshall, 1961), innovator (Kirzner, 1997; Kuratko, Hornsby, & Goldsby, 2007; Schumpeter, 1934), but needs to approach by management with balance (Volberda, 1998). That is keeping in mind that organizational flexibility is at the intersection of individual behaviors and competencies and organizational resources (Volberda, 1998). While taking a few of the entrepreneurial descriptors into account, innovation and risk-seeking behaviors must involve other non-entrepreneurs and management buy-in in the uphill battle of maximizing the firm's entrepreneurial spirit. It has been noted that at some firm's inefficiency is the norm (Leibenstein, 1968). When leadership pursues an entrepreneurial trajectory, it evokes internal change, then organizational barriers ensue, followed by employee resistance. This study examination pertains to the entrepreneurial behaviors of leadership as the main catalyst of dissolution of organizational barriers and resistance to flexibility.

Entrepreneurship is the dark corner of the business and economics literature (Hébert, & Link, 1982), but it is the creative and innovative purposeful action and a keen alertness of opportunity (Mises, 1949; Kirzner 1997). Leadership, when added to entrepreneurial behaviors, provides strategic vision (Mintzberg, 1989) a fusion of purpose (Bass, & Avolio, 1994) and a culture of collaboration, inspiration, and energy (Northouse, 2007). How does entrepreneurial leadership coincide with a firm's flexibility? How can incumbent firms compete with newcomers without being flexible? Something of great importance, but rarely discussed, is how can incumbent firms become more flexible and how can they work through emerging and serendipitous strategies? These inquiries are in line with the already *sui generis* nature of the entrepreneur but takes a closer examination as to how entrepreneurial leadership impacts flexibility within a given firm, because entrepreneurs create the entrepreneurial spirit that links leaders and followers (Gross, 2019). To date, only a small amount of research has delved into the nature of entrepreneurial leadership within the firm, but they have generally shied away from any tangible determinates. There is a need for further theoretical connection with firm-level determinates and some interfirm context in understanding the nature of entrepreneurial leadership, particularly firm-level flexibility (Renko, et al., 2015).

This paper is similar in substance to the salient work of Mintzberg, & Westley (1992) cycles of change, whereby landscape dynamics create cycles of change that act more like a *system of moving circles*, as change happens either deductively or inductively. Entrepreneurial leadership is an inductive force. Entrepreneurial leadership is likely to have some level of impact on a firm's flexibility, notwithstanding the many enterprise barriers that slow down the momentum of the entrepreneurial spirit (Liebstein, 1968). As the saying goes "a change in thinking with no change in action" (Mintzberg, & Westley, 1992, p.41) cannot positively contribute to firm flexibility. A firm's flexibility derives from the force of change and because change is constant, all firms are subject to it. For example, employees' names change, operations change, customers change, so "a company must be flexible" (Rodgers, 1992, p. 188).

In this regard, several theorists have shown how important and relevant entrepreneurial leadership is when starting corporate ventures, creating ventures, innovating, and implementing internal strategic initiatives (Barbuto, 2016; Fernald, Solomon, & Tarabishy, 2005; Hmieleski, & Ensley, 2007; Mintzberg, & Waters, 1985; Renko, et al., 2015). Organizational flexibility is in effect the potentiality of a given firm, at any time, or market, response to competitive market pressures and market signals due to the degree of competitiveness in the business landscape (Brozovic, 2018). Environmental factors that impact flexibility include regulations, technologies, competitors, and even a strategic model reengineering – factors that point to the probability of changing internal circumstances. Because firms sell products and offer services in consumer markets, there tends to be a relevant concern as to the extent the firm can increase flexibility in order to meet market demands and compete in hotly contested consumer markets. There is an attempt to convey the relevancy of entrepreneurial leadership in an organization's pursuit of organizational flexibility. The importance of entrepreneurial leadership as a transitioning force and facilitator of flexibility is a focal point, because flexibility is a firm's ability to adapt to market changes and environments (Atkinson, 1985; Kouropalatis, Hughes, & Morgan, 2012; Scott, & Meyer, 1994).

The current study follows similar views held by other authors (Brozovic, 2018; Fernald, et al., 2005; Leitch, & Volery, 2017; Mintzberg, & Waters, 1985; Mintzberg, & Westley, 1992; Renko, et al., 2015; Shane, & Venkataraman, 2000) in that entrepreneurial leadership primarily involves processes, people, structure, strategy-making, decision-making, and seeking to exploit future-oriented opportunity (Kirzner, 1999; Fernald, et al., 2005). Flexible organizations possess the ability to deal with change in the environment or of internal management systems itself (Carlsson, 1999; De Groote, 1994; Chowdary, 2001). Additionally, Organizational flexibility involves freedom of choice and the creation of options within the firm. Entrepreneurial leadership is best explained as a force of influence, and is a dynamic process that embodies vision, change, and creation (Sushil, 2000; Kuratko, et al., 2007). Kuratko, et al. (2007) goes on to say that entrepreneurial leadership "...requires an application of energy and passion towards the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solutions" (p. 3). Therefore, the use of entrepreneurial leadership employed to effectively dismantle the barriers to a more flexible organization has yet to be explored – quantitatively, qualitatively, or theoretically.

This inquiry is significant because the entrepreneurial leadership literature, in its current state, does not reveal the importance of this type of leadership in adapting serendipitous approaches to interfirm decision-making and strategy-making through the lens of entrepreneurial action. Additionally, this paper explores the transitional force behind a firm's adaptation to market changes and competitive pressures that facilitate the ability to capture positive unintended consequences through entrepreneurial leadership (Coulson-Thomas, 2015). According to Antonakis, & Autio (2007) entrepreneurial leadership is an "neglected area of entrepreneurial research" (p. 189), and that, entrepreneurship could stand to gain from a closer integration with leadership research" (p. 203). There is, albeit on theoretical grounds, a need to examine the literature for possible connections between entrepreneurial leadership and organizational flexibility.

The internal barriers to organizational flexibility will be examined with an inside-out perspective. The following question will guide this examination: How can entrepreneurial leadership impact organizational flexibility barriers? This inquiry is timely, being that contemporary firms face increasing competition and more consumer demands relying on more value-added activities than ever before (Sharma, & Jain, 2010). In today's market economy, it is essential that firms have flexible capability in times of change and uncertainty or the competitive advantage to avoid change. Quick, rapid, but well-structured responses to market signals are not the exception but the rule, which impacts a firm's resources both positively and negatively (Parnell, 2005).

The answer to why this line of inquiry persists can be attributed to Leitch, & Volery (2017) who

proposed that more studies are needed to examine the nature of interorganizational entrepreneurial leadership. There is no question that management and leadership must initiate flexible changes and adjust, lead with vision, solve problems, take risks, and initiate strategy (Fernald, et al., 2005). And, if the firm remains flexible, management then assumes an open-system approach, and at some level there is inherent interorganizational resistance to change (Gromoff, Kazantsev, Kozhevnikov, Ponfilenok, & Stavenko, 2012). Change and flexibility are interwoven catalysts, which opens this inquiry that entrepreneurial leadership must be a conveyor of vision and influence needed to pursue a trajectory of organizational flexibility.

Review of the Literature

The proceeding sections of this paper offer a review of the entrepreneurial leadership and organizational flexibility, theoretical framework, and ends with a conclusion and future research considerations.

Entrepreneurial Leadership

Much has been written and hypothesized about the individual entrepreneur, and corporate venturing, but few have clearly added to the theoretical nature of entrepreneurial leadership as an active participant within the firm. Is entrepreneurial leadership axiomatically associated with the rugged bootstrapping of a small upstart, or is there a need to further explicate what is meant by entrepreneurial leadership that operates within a firm and perhaps under the auspice of management? Since there is a narrow distinction between management and entrepreneurial behaviors, it is profitable to discern a few definitions of entrepreneurial leadership. As such, Surie, & Ashley (2008) defined entrepreneurial leadership as a firm that is “capable of sustaining innovation and adaptation in high velocity and uncertain environments” (p. 235). Roomi, & Harrison (2011) also add that EL works as “a fusion of these two constructs: having and communicating the vision to engage teams to identify, develop and take advantage of opportunity in order to gain competitive advantage” (p. 1). Kuratko, et al. (2007) said that EL is “a dynamic process of vision, change, and creation. It requires an application of energy and passion towards the creation and implementation of new ideas and creative solutions” (p. 3). What has not been added to the rather broad definitions of entrepreneurial leadership, is that: entrepreneurial leadership is a competitive tool, imitable to any given firm at any given time and marketplace and is a creator of a competitive advantage by using vision and influence during times of uncertainty and risks-taking.

The very idea that leadership has a function in a marketplace has been proclaimed by many theorists in the economics area (Hébert, & Link, 1982); however, it was only a few prominent economists that have delved into the role of the entrepreneur as a leader in a marketplace. For example, a prominent Austrian economist has gone on to say that an entrepreneur is one who displays purposeful human action and has the characteristics of leadership. Over the centuries many schools of economic thought, out of the Austrian School, the Harvard Tradition, the German Historical School, and the Neoclassical School, has provided increments of discourse concerning the nature of entrepreneurship. Of course, the conceptualization of market action was insightfully established by Ludwick von Mises out of the Austrian School. However, Mises was not the only voice in this long line of discussion related to the vital quest in establishing the ideal entrepreneur, and what they do that is at variance with non-entrepreneurs. A few have voiced that entrepreneurship is taking on inherent risk (Knight, 1933); the entrepreneur is a disruptive innovator (Schumpeter, 1934). Additionally, Salerno (2008) separated the differences between those that can act on leadership principles entrepreneurially and those who cannot be due to their ability to adjust and move swiftly to change conditions in the marketplace. Salerno goes on to say that it is “the quality of leadership possessed by those who introduce new products or radically new methods of producing old products (p. 194).

In this sense, the entrepreneur assumes the risks in the use of the capital employed in which to create combinations that are intended to change conditions not only for one’s own sake, but for the

sake of the satisfaction and desires of customers (Rothbard, 1985, p. 547). The entrepreneurial leader is one who assumes the risks of uncertainty (Knight, 1933), and the decision-maker, or one who supplies the financial capital (Mises, 1949). Schumpeter (1934) stated that the entrepreneur is anyone within a firm who pursue new combinations with resources. These combinations include the combination of firms and or the mobility of resources toward new allocations. Entrepreneurs seek out ways to act in the market that reflects their purpose, skills, creativity, and ability to recombine resources based on external opportunities. That is, entrepreneurial leadership is an internal capability, knowledge, and distinctive competency that transmits a climate of vision and values needed to energize the innovative behaviors that are conducive to increasing the firm's competitive advantage. Entrepreneurial leadership is not for only start-ups but is a necessary for incumbent firms to compete with newcomer firms in the fight for market dominant designs. Entrepreneurial leadership serves the life of the firm past the start-up phase of business operations.

The Flexible Organization

Sushil (2001) and Roberts, & Stockport (2009) agreed that flexibility of the enterprise has been well documented and conceived in several writings (Handy, 1995; Kanter, 1994; Peters, 1987; Steers, 1975). However, it was Volberda (1999) who provided four categories of firms: (a) rigid, (b) planned, (c) flexible, or (d) chaotic. Relating to flexible organizations, three approaches were provided: (a) general, (b) functional, and (c) actor (Sharma, & Jain, 2010; Sushil, 2001; Volberda, 1999). It is the actor approach to flexibility that specifically focuses on the values and behaviors within the firm (Volberda, 1999). The actor's behaviors are either self-constrained or unconstrained as firms approach a transition in paradigm of flexibility. The actor approach "highlights the important roles and traits of different functions in developing flexibility, such as the character of the *entrepreneur* (uncertainty creating or reducing), *management* (risk rewarding or risk-averse) employees (satisfaction by routines or variety)" (Volberda, 1999 p. 4). That is, unconstrained characteristics tend to be more conducive to organizational flexibility.

In a general sense, organizational flexibility (Sushil, 2001) can be described by the following dimensions: adaptiveness, openness, responsiveness, change, freedom, agility, reliance, and customization. van der Weerd, Volberda, Verwaal, & Stienstra (2012) stated, "Flexibility is perceived to be a managerial task" (p. 15). This assertion points to the capabilities of management and leadership in flexible firms. It can be assumed that leadership of flexible organizations are tasked with challenging uncertainty, affecting change, and maintaining continuity; these are important factors facing managers. However, little is known about the determinates of entrepreneurial leadership facilitation of organizational flexibility. Flexibility and leadership have interactive effects on firm-level performance, mobilization, absorptive capacity, knowledge base of management, and managerial capabilities (Jansen, Van den Bosch, & Volberda, 2005).

Flexibility is theoretically rooted in the areas of firm agility and change management (Sushil, 1999), enterprise architecture and co-adaptation (Gromoff, et al., 2012), pursue innovation (Schumpeter, 1950), and competition (Grewal, & Tanshuhaj, 2001). Equally important, but has not gained much attention, is leadership behaviors that drive and facilitate flexibility and its dynamic in impact on the barriers to flexibility. Changing a core competency or value-added capability can demonstrably change a firm's strategic trajectory (Sanchez, 1996). With that in mind, firms can recoil, that is, firms can return to their core values and competencies, which is a positive intended consequence of flexibility. Change, per se, is an indefinite move away from a set of core competencies, especially if the intention of management is to not return to those core competencies at a later future date. Whereas, this paper establishes firm flexibility as *a coiling and recoiling* of the firm's value emphasis, scope, attitude, et cetera., once objectives have been met then retracted back to a core set of tenets, values, and competencies to meet the demands of a reconfigured business landscape.

Flexibility, change, and leadership must, in this case, be seen as a triple bond needed for coiling and then recoiling flexibility within a given firm. All things related to the general idea of firm flexibility starts at the helm of leadership. Thus, the questions remain: Can entrepreneurial leadership most significantly overcome the barriers of flexibility within a given firm? Will entrepreneurial leadership impact organizational flexibility at three fronts: competitive, operations, and strategic?

There are three broad types of organizational flexibilities – operational, competitive, and strategic (Sharma, & Jain, 2010). Operational flexibility is such that any changes do not require major shifts between the firm and its environment. Changes in terms of operational flexibility are temporary and not long lasting or substantive in nature. Competitive flexibility creates major changes and shifts in a firm's market position, such as the introduction of something new or novel to a market. And, strategic flexibility which is a consequence of a dynamic and radical new development and tend to be directly related to changes in the firm's environment. Because flexibility is a complex construct, and it has multipronged proclivities toward market changes, it is imperative to engage theoretical research questions about moves made by competitors and a firm's responses to competitors moves and its environment. A given firm's market proclivities are related to the creation of new products, entering new markets, and maintaining a market position of stability (Sharma, & Jain, 2010). While there are other flexibilities (i.e. technical, financial, and marketing), it is likely that management and leadership are closer to the competitive, operational and strategic organizational engagements. Leadership is significant in relation to flexibility, particularly, if flexibility is viewed as a transitional process whereby the instability of the business landscape is in constant flux which causes operational and strategic coiling and recoiling to maintain a competitive advantage and market position. However, with most things, operations and strategic tactics have certain degrees of obsolescence, making that very competitive advantage, in the long run, clearly a disadvantage creating organizational inflexibility. At a deeper level, how does the organizational flexibility shape or is shaped by leadership behaviors?

ter Hoeven, & van Zoonen (2015) pointed to the job design having significant effects on subordinate autonomy and spatial flexibility. Mendez, Howell, & Bishop (2015) sampled 28 committees and reported a correlation between leadership behaviors and performance. On the other hand, Schriesheim, Castro, Zhou, & DeChurch (2006) sampled 169 employees in 40 distinct groups and reported that a leader's own perception of his or her behaviors is more significant than group members' observation effects of leadership behaviors. Silverthorne (2001) focused on managers' ability to change leadership behaviors based on a change in the business environment and whether leader changes improved subordinate performance improvements over time.

Objectives of the Study

The main objective of this study is to theoretically examine and connect entrepreneurial leadership and organizational flexibility theories. Both theories have not been examined or tested on the interaction and consequential effects within and between the firm. This is a purely theoretical attempt to set the stage for further research by providing research questions and postulates. Research questions and postulates emerge from the vast amount of prior research studies.

Three postulates are provided based on the interaction between entrepreneurial leadership and organizational flexibility in this new framework:

- P₁: Entrepreneurial leadership has a positive impact on operational flexibility
- P₂: Entrepreneurial leadership has a positive impact on competitive flexibility
- P₃: Entrepreneurial leadership has a positive impact on strategic flexibility

Methodology

The methodology of this study consists of reviewing prior research studies from the extant literature from flexibility, strategy, and leadership to develop a new conceptual framework. This literature was employed to develop a new theoretical framework that explains the interaction and consequential effects of entrepreneurial leadership and organizational flexibility. As a result of examining the extant literature, a set of postulates and research questions was formed for profitable future research endeavors. Studies were culled based on their inclusion of keywords: management, strategic management, flexibility of the firm, and entrepreneurial studies (theory and application).

Analysis and Interpretation

Entrepreneurial Leadership Attitudes and Behavior Changes

To capture unintended opportunity, especially when the firm is faced with fierce competition, shared values between leadership and subordinates must be established to obtain and maintain a climate of high velocity movements and knowledge acquisition. Values that are internally reexamined allow innovation and flexibility to flourish, as opposed to a closed enterprise system, one that is unable to shift emphasis on values in the face of competition, which eventually creates a forced rejection out of a given market (Ensign, & Robinson, 2016). Changing emphasis on values, attitudes, and beliefs can be stymied by the value of risk aversion. Along these lines, Tang, & Rothenberg (2009) mentioned, “Values evolve and become more conservative, risk averse, and less dynamic as a firm transforms into a mature corporation” (p. 183). For this reason, Ensign and Robinson promoted two types of corporate entrepreneurs: *offensive* and *defensive*. The offensive and the defensive entrepreneurial capabilities have consequential effects on the likely approach to organizational flexibility. One effect is the movement of values and perhaps an abrupt shift of interests; another effect is the challenge to preexisting values, processes, procedures, and structures (Ensign, & Robinson, 2016).

An offensive entrepreneurial climate creates an innovative environment where ideas can flourish, which extends by shifting an emphasis of values. This type of offensive entrepreneurship (Ensign, & Robinson, 2016) seems likely to support flexibility, but the kind of flexibility that can make extensions, value adjustments, and return to an original state (i.e., the coiling and recoiling effect) at some point in time. Change of creative attitudes and behaviors to reach entrepreneurial goals must be adapted at some point of the firm’s life cycle (Newman, et al., 2018). In the same way, leaders who are entrepreneurial have abilities that distinguish them from nonentrepreneurial leaders, whose differentiation resides in what Fernald, et al. (2005) called the “entrepreneurial mentality” (p. 4). To take Fernald et al.’s position and ranking of flexibility as a common characteristic, here it is shown that it is leadership that supports flexibility from an enterprise perspective. Newman, et al. (2018) explained that entrepreneurship is the process whereby the leader influences subordinates to recognize and exploit opportunities toward entrepreneurial goals.

Kuratko, Ireland, Covin, & Hornsby (2005) suggested that spontaneous and opportunity-seeking behaviors are inherent in any entrepreneurial pursuits within any given firm. Therefore, entrepreneurial leaders influence and motivate others to pursue entrepreneurial goals (Gupta, MacMillian, & Surie, 2004). If there are behaviors that entrepreneurial individuals, groups, and institutions possess, what are the patterns that persist in different marketplaces? Does the entrepreneurial mentality remain or adapt when exposed to different marketplaces or innovative opportunities in various firms? If it does, what is the pattern of flexibility in various industries and the leadership that influenced those adaptations? As industry players change competitive positions in given markets requires vision, strategic initiatives, and persistence in times of uncertainty. “The recognition and exploitation of new business opportunities are called for in entrepreneurship research” (Hoskisson, Covin, Volberda, & Johnson, 2011, p. 1144).

Entrepreneurial leadership facilitates enterprise flexibility in that employee behaviors and attitudes are affected by change (Soriano, & Martinez, 2007). The benefit of entrepreneurial leadership is to affect subordinates' behavior and attitude toward positive change during new circumstances that requires adaptivity and capability. It has been long established that when firms adhere to the constraining elements of institutional policy, resources, and procedures, entrepreneurial activity is prohibited (Ensign, & Robinson, 2016). Without effective employee behavioral substitutes and modifications to facilitate enterprise change, flexibility is indefensible. Therefore, entrepreneurial leadership *transmits, exchanges* knowledge, has the know-how and the how-to, that *changes* subordinates' attitudes and behaviors when faced with the many barriers to enterprise flexibility. It is theorized that entrepreneurial leadership transmission of values, knowledge, and beliefs, will, in effect, decrease the barriers to enterprise flexibility. Bhardwaj, & Momaya (2006) salient case study on the effects of corporate entrepreneurship on organizational flexibility with emphasis on the S-A-P analysis developed by Sushil (1997). The gap and limitation of their analysis was the explication of the "actor, "who is henceforth is described as an entrepreneur with attitudes and behaviors that other management/subordinates do not possess but can be transmitted and exchanged to create competitive advantages.

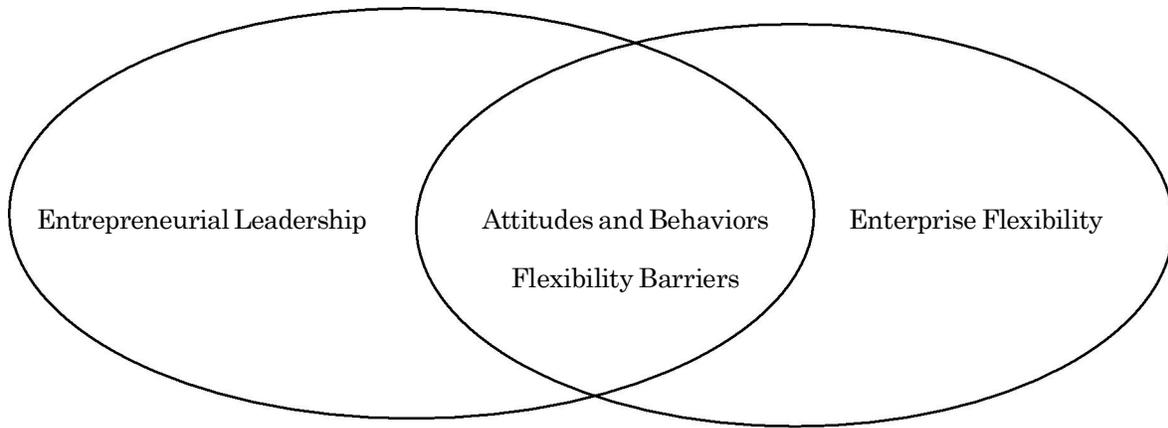


Figure No. 1: Entrepreneurial leadership as a catalyst for enterprise flexibility

P₁: Entrepreneurial leadership has a significant impact on subordinates' attitudes and work-related behaviors.

Entrepreneurial Leadership as the Catalyst for Enterprise Flexibility

Entrepreneurial leadership transmits tacit knowledge (e.g., the firm is a collection of knowledge) through the social environment – those very characteristics that they embody. Some of these characteristics are creators of novelty, independent, innovators, learners, optimizers of resources, optimistic, risk takers, resourceful, and initiators (Landstrom, 1999). Enterprise flexibility at the firm level has barriers that require value-added activities to overcome the inertia established by the status quo of enterprise rigidity, such as the other barriers to flexibility outlined by Brozovic (2018). Brozovic's proposed barriers to flexibility are (a) rigidity, (b) management issues, (c) technology, (d) structural barriers, and (e) resistance to change. However, it does depend on the type of flexibility which ex ante specifies correlative attitude, behavior, and value-added activities. Sushil (2000) and Volberda (1996) agreed that attitudes and behaviors of those involved in flexibility (i.e., recoiling process) establish a supporting cast of group members whose mission is to create value-added activities within the constraints of a business model (Leitch, & Volery, 2017).

The ability to transmit beliefs, knowledge, and values to subordinates reside in the characteristics of entrepreneurial leaders themselves, whose knowledge and vision when transmitted to subordi-

nates is significant enough to increase the chances of a shared vision that encompasses a future orientation or transformation within a business model (Gupta, et al., 2004). The entrepreneurial leaders transmit beliefs and values via their vision (Ruvio, Rosenblatt, & Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2010); visions create the ideal mindset comprising and incorporating stages in growth, innovation, and the creation toward a somewhat uncertain future whereas a reactive and nonadaptive vision can have the opposite effects. Ensign, & Robinson (2016) said, “Entrepreneurship will occur and succeed if previously held views and beliefs are abandoned” (p. 176).

P₂: Entrepreneurial leadership has a positive impact on organizational flexibility.

Entrepreneurial Leadership and Organizational Flexibility Barriers

Kuratko, et al. (2007) described the entrepreneurial leader with several characteristics associated with the *spirit* of the traditional entrepreneur: risk taker, idea champion, and prime innovator, and innovative in the sense that they are at the cross-section of various functions with the firm’s business strategy. Along with Kuratko’s entrepreneurial leadership characteristics are a willingness to change direction, focus on long-term results, and have the temperament to tolerate ambiguity (Balkin, & Logan, 1988). According to Hentschke (2010), three characteristics embody entrepreneurial leadership: they have unique ideas, they raise capital (financial and social), and they seek business growth based on ideas. Cast and scenario enactment, including building commitments and specifying limits, are accomplished by entrepreneurial leaders by framing challenges, absorbing uncertainty, and clearing a path (Gupta, et al., 2004).

Other factors related to the spirit of entrepreneurial leadership that get far less attention is the *external factors*, which also comprise those parties affiliated within a strategic groups that directly and indirectly impact the fluidity of the enterprise flexibility (Jones, & Crompton, 2009). Volberda (1999) agreed, stating, “It is hard to find managers who refer to their organizations as stable, orderly, and non-changing” (p. 17). But, as known, entrepreneurial leaders do not work in silos but within a social setting – the organization; either way it is, there is a coordination of information and an alertness of opportunity (Kirzner, 1973) that creates an imbalance toward a firm’s competitive advantage or a disequilibrium (Schumpeter, 1950). Although, the adjustment process concerning equilibrium has not been explored (Praag, 1999). Thus, the entrepreneurial leadership phenomenon falls within two categories: an internal venture or the internal group (i.e., intrapreneurship; Balkin, & Logan, 1988). The firm can take on either category but will ultimately have to challenge interfirm rigidity (Kouropalatis, et al., 2012; Singh, Oberoi, & Ahuja, 2013), lack of information (Shimizu, & Hitt, 2004), resistance to change (Skordoulis, 2004), and cultural and structural barriers (Hickman, 1998; Volberda, 1999).

Interfirm rigidity, lack of information, resistance to change, and cultural and structural barriers are the most difficult obstacles to overcome within any organizational context. Taking these barriers into consideration, a firm has two options: either be proactive or reactive in the face of competitive pressures, because no option is the worst option. Even the very notion of a reactive response to competition entails a level of flexibility (i.e., recoiling). That is, flexibility does not specify a direction of the firm’s strategy, only that the core of the firm has shifted (or extended) in another unintended direction and consequently may return to its original core at a future date and time. However, the main idea here is to connect the core principles of entrepreneurial leadership that support firm flexibility with inherent barriers.

Entrepreneurial Leadership Supports Enterprise Flexibilities

Tables no. 1 and table no. 2 provide dimensions of both constructs (i.e. entrepreneurial leadership and organizational flexibility). Each of the construct’s dimensions are associative but do not imply a one-to-one correlation. One of the strongest leadership characteristics is a leader’s vision, regardless if the vision was conceptualized either in the entrepreneurial mindset or collectively. It is not a

Table No. 1: Flexible Barriers Explained

Flexible barrier	Description
Internal rigidity	Preference of a status quo; negative contribution to performance; maladaptation to existing or future market changes.
Lack of information	Lack environment know-how; unaware of level of uncertainty; starts with fear of the unknown; established routines; inability to reverse seemingly poor decisions; harsh on mistakes.
Resistance to change	Closed versus open systems; difficulty coping with business cycles; organizational reservations.
Structural and cultural barriers	Organizational survival is attained when matched to its environment; organizations can adapt to its resource or to the norms and beliefs of an environment; organizations can be prisoners of their past, which disables future changes.

Source: Brozovic (2018)

Table No. 2: Entrepreneurial Leadership Dimensions

Leadership dimension	Description
Vision	“A vision is formulated by explicitly identifying a domain for competitive behavior, a set of sources of competitive strength, and a profile for resource capability.”
Problem solving	“Effective leadership must solve, or face, problems quickly and forcefully, regardless of their nature.”
Decision making	“Whether leaders are directive or supportive, they know they must make decisions that commit the organization to critical actions.”
Risk taking	“Leaders must weigh the multitudinous factors involved, while understanding that no one can predict the future with certainty”
Strategic initiatives	“leadership, strategies, and structure will reflect entrepreneurial thinking with associated characteristics, e.g., a problem-solving and action orientation.”

Source: Fernald, et al. (2005)

surprise that entrepreneurial leaders use visions to share and gain information between groups and units as a decentralizing mechanism, thereby, decreasing boundaries and allowing information to flow within the firm. This is a critical component of how entrepreneurial leaders are effective even it most of the operations are automated, whereby the entrepreneurial visions and problem solving are critical in the context of advisor or coordinator (Coulson-Thomas, 2015) or even applicable in enterprise architecture (Gromoff, et al., 2012).

Conceived from entrepreneurship (Kirzner, 1999; Schumpeter, 1950), entrepreneurial types discover and exploit the opportunity and are alert to options that drive opportunistic choices. Without this

level of universal awareness within the firm, the result is poor alignment and non-agile perspectives and non-agile structure. Why is there a lack of information, and how does a lack of information bottleneck the firm market change opportunities when attempting to respond to market changes? In many areas of the firm attempts to change are first considered from a strategic perspective, because flexibility is costly and evokes employee resistance (Coulson-Thomas, 2015). Entrepreneurial leadership enables flexibility through decision making with a commitment to the objective, which is vital when the firm *encounters threats* that were unforeseen and or in the pursuit of new business models (Sharma, & Jain, 2010). Entrepreneurial leadership was reported to be significantly related to enterprise performance during mergers and acquisitions, primarily because of the influence, vision, and decision-making qualities of this type of leader during transitional times of chaos and ambiguity (Strobl, Bauer, & Matzler, 2018).

A lack of organizational flexibility is associative with rigidity in decision-making and associated the maintenance of a status quo. Any leadership team, particularly a new top management team or new strategic leadership, has approximately 180 days (6 months) before the tyranny of the status quo sets in and no changes can be effectively made (Friedman, & Friedman, 1984). While it may sound optimistic that only entrepreneurial leaders drive flexibility and are the motivators of subordinates, evidently, their role is critical in disrupting the tyranny of the status quo. The disruptive connotation of entrepreneurial leadership moves the enterprise away from a state of rigidity by employing value-added capabilities, embracing serendipity across all levels of the enterprise, and maintaining high levels of alertness to advance unforeseen opportunities. Nonentrepreneurial leaders do not foresee the devastating bad effects of the status quo on concentrated areas of enterprise performance. However, the good effects from entrepreneurial leadership, when serendipity arises or emerges from a business strategy, will need to be cultivated and influenced by entrepreneurial leadership and subordinates to achieve the good effects of flexibility.

Depending on the various forms of strategy making, one can provide further evidence that strategic initiative, as an entrepreneurial leadership dimension, will challenge the internal firm's barriers that disable flexibility. Barbuto (2016) described strategy-making processes as autocratic, transformative, rational, or political, depending on the complexity of the firm, and call for a certain type of leadership approach. Mintzberg, & Waters (1985) created eight types of strategic approaches: (a) planned, (b) entrepreneurial, (c) ideological, (d) umbrella, (e) process, (f) unconnected, (g) consensus, and (h) imposed. Each of these strategic types have an embedded consequence resulting in *change* and *flexibility*, which is initiated by either the entrepreneurial leader or a team of entrepreneurial leaders; and, this type of leadership tendentiously comports with action, which is a prerequisite of influence that originates from an entrepreneurial mindset. Out of these eight strategy types, seven originate and are formulated by leadership. Most compelling is the descriptors and illustrations where entrepreneurial leadership plays a central role in both determining the type of strategy and how it is shaped.

For example, the entrepreneurial strategy type starts as an individualized, unarticulated vision from leadership. The intention of an entrepreneurial type of strategy is that it allow for what emerges. Conversely, a planned strategy, albeit not known for its entrepreneurial spirit, typifies the process of planning that is inherent in the formulation of planning the use of resources. The process of planning establishes a series of the formalized plans to confirm the strategy as *surprise-free*, meaning, primarily, that the strategy is and will be constrained by an initially conceptualized direction of preplanned goals including managerial controls to hone them in. This approach is codified under the auspice of a constrained approach, which is ineffective in a competitive landscape driven by new market demands, competitive pressures, and new circumstances of the firm.

P₃: Entrepreneurial leadership has a positive impact on strategic flexibility

Conclusion

As a matter of course, prior research emerges and help establish *a priori* research questions and postulates emerging from this new conceptual framework to later be tested and examined by future researchers *a posteriori*.

Four research questions are extrapolated from this examination that need to be quantitatively examined:

RQ₁: Entrepreneurial leadership has a significant impact on subordinates' attitudes and work-related behaviors.

RQ₂: Entrepreneurial leadership has a positive impact on organizational flexibility.

RQ₃: Entrepreneurial leadership has a positive impact on operational flexibility

RQ₄: Entrepreneurial leadership has a positive impact on competitive flexibility

RQ₅: Entrepreneurial leadership has a positive impact on strategic flexibility

What has been established as theoretical contributions are innumerable to the flexibility and entrepreneurial leadership literature. These contributions to the literature persist that entrepreneurial leadership could potentially be associative of and/or facilitate those attitudes and behaviors required for organizational flexibility. In a similar vein, linking the entrepreneurial leadership characteristics to overcome the barriers to enterprise flexibility is a much-required injection into the entrepreneurial leadership literature. Certainly, this connection between (EL) and (Of) needs to be tested empirically. Entrepreneurial leadership positively influence strategy implementation, change management, and performance (Adler, Goldoftas, & Levine, 1999). To date, there is sparse empirical evidence illuminating the positive effects of entrepreneurial leadership on organizational flexibility, performance, and firm's adaptation to change (incremental, radical, etcetera) so that the determinates of entrepreneurial leadership can be understood; but as it stands, the results are limited. The limited amount of empirical evidence connecting these constructs no doubt leaves several gaps in the literature. The current paper attempted to start an increasingly important dialogue that informs how entrepreneurial leadership supports any variation of enterprise flexibility. In this regard, entrepreneurial leaders are creators of new and novel paths of inductive strategic initiatives, but they also carry out deductive strategic initiatives based on preestablished objectives that involve an entrepreneurial mindset (Kuratko, Hornsby, & Goldsby, 2007; Mintzberg, & Westley, 1992). Entrepreneurial leadership influences others to act on new ideas and search for exploitation and discovery, while not being overtly innovative per se; but entrepreneurial leadership's challenge is to direct market change, change that is either revolutionary, isolated, incremental, or focused. Entrepreneurial leaders influence flexibility (i.e., recoiling) by viewing competitive tactics as an *outsider* – those who have the capability to challenge future uncertainty and have a vastly different perspective – or as *insiders* (Ensign, & Robinson, 2016), where their effectiveness can be decreased, which “becomes a prisoner of familiarity” (Drucker, 1986, p. 44).

Discussion

Henry Ford found and hired employees who were gifted “tinkerers,” many of whom were direct contributors and were duly attributed to some of the most significant innovations of the 20th century (Zunz, 1990). Characterizing Ford's “tinkerers” as entrepreneurial leaders of his day, Zunz, went on to say that it was the constant “...exchange of ideas that led to innovation” (p. 87). The interconnection of vision, influence, and transformational decision-making, entrepreneurial leadership an effective type of leadership but needs more theoretical development. Henceforth, the development of the entrepreneur can be traced as far back as Richard Cantillon's conceptualization of the entrepreneur as the market mechanism, Schumpeter's disequilibrium; Abbe' Nicolas Baudeau's entrepreneur was the inventor and/or innovator that created profit under uncertainty, even Jean-Baptiste Say added that his

entrepreneur (in his *Cours Complet d'économie politique pratique*) methodically employs three steps: has the attainment of a certain knowledge, is able to apply that certain knowledge, and can apply the certain knowledge to the end of a product (Hébert, & Link, 1982). From an Austrian School perspective, there is a leadership quality that is coupled with an entrepreneurial disposition that orient one toward organization and positive influence of a firm's factors of production (Salerno, 2008).

Entrepreneurial leadership is a competitive synthesizer; this type of leadership notices opportunity on the horizon that others are unable to notice (Kirzner, 1997). This type of leadership also supports the recoiling cycle (i.e., reflexivity) as a firm's value emphasis shifts according to market changes, extended, and then retracted to get back to core competencies. For example, management is encouraged to shift value emphasis and increase flexibility because of market signals. To address market signals, management can either make routine or nonroutine decisions; nonroutine decisions require a high level of strategic thinking that is entrepreneurial in nature (Child, 2015, Gross, 2016). Entrepreneurially driven firms are primed to be more alert to market signals and can employ flexibility on a temporal or intertemporal basis. Perhaps firms can be elastically flexible, in that they extend, and contract resources based on a less extreme basis in terms of level of intended flexibility and uncertain market conditions. A flexible cycle and the elastic entrepreneurial function would increase the level of uncertainty, but it increases the entrepreneurial behaviors in the firm and provide agile intertemporal transition of resources to employ short term market competitiveness. Thus, entrepreneurial leadership should not be viewed as a one-man army or "leadership by informed consent" (Hickman, 1998, p. 196) but there are individual factors that come in to play in determining effectiveness in the pursuit of flexibility (i.e. competitive flexibility, strategic flexibility, or operational flexibility). Employees (entrepreneurial or nonentrepreneurial) are aware of both the constrained and unconstrained nature of the firm; but often, they already have an end in mind but are without the means to set forth an entrepreneurial trajectory. Entrepreneurial decision-making and strategic thinking are major components of a firm's operational system. A strong climate of entrepreneurial leadership, which has many advantages, serves as an interorganizational catalyst to overcoming organizational barriers, taking advantage of organizational flexibility.

Scope of further Research

The scope of future research in this vineyard must focus on the consequential effects of entrepreneurial leadership on strategic flexibility and its relation to time. The research focus needs to examine the firm level and individual level of analysis. That is, determine which is the most flexible, either the firm, market, or the individual. It is in this vein that future research must endeavor. Future research must endeavor in these areas not only quantitatively, but also qualitatively with a focus on the intertemporal nature of time.

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