Knowing, but not enacting leadership: navigating the leadership knowing-doing gap in leveraging leadership development

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KNOWING, BUT NOT ENACTING LEADERSHIP: NAVIGATING THE LEADERSHIP KNOWING-DOING GAP IN LEVERAGING LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

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ABSTRACT

What managers know about leadership (e.g. conceptual and procedural knowledge) does not necessarily predict what they do (applied knowledge) in organizations. This research explores the leadership knowing-doing gap, which we define as a discrepancy between managers' leadership knowing and the extent to which they transfer it into leadership doing. Taking a phenomenological approach, we explore how and why managers experience the leadership knowing-doing gap, analyzing 65 critical incidents from interviews with 22 managers in leadership roles across various organizational levels in the United Kingdom. We present the leadership knowing-doing gap as a multifaceted, dynamic and complex experience involving cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements. We discuss how these elements interplay in influencing the dynamics of creating or widening the gap on the one hand, and preventing or closing the gap on the other hand. We shed light into factors that influence the leadership knowing-doing gap: motivation, prioritization, and confidence to enact leadership. We also highlight the role of the context in discrepancies between leadership knowing and doing. Our definition and proposed framework offer a conceptualization that advances the understanding of the leadership knowing-doing gap. We end with our theoretical contributions and practical implications for both management learning and leadership development.

Keywords

Leadership Development; Leadership Knowing-Doing Gap; Qualitative Leadership Development Research

What managers learn is not always fully utilized in their practice in organizations (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Hoover, Giambatista, Sorenson, & Bommer, 2010). *Knowing* (conceptual and procedural knowledge) does not necessarily predict *doing* (applied knowledge) (Baldwin, Pierce, Joines, & Farouk, 2011). The *knowing-doing gap* concept (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000) originally addressed the challenge of transferring management knowledge into practice. The management learning literature frames this phenomenon as a transfer problem (Baldwin & Ford, 1988) that occurs when managers do not apply knowledge, skills, or abilities acquired through a learning experience back in the workplace (Hutchins, Burke, & Berthelsen, 2010). Within the leadership literature, researchers highlighted this as a transfer failure (Warhurst, 2012) or application gap (Conger, 2013). Despite a rising interest in leadership development to support managers in their practice of leadership (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014; Vogel, Reichard, Batistič, & Černe, 2021), more time, effort and investment is devoted in building leadership knowledge than in actually applying it (Blanchard, Meyer, & Ruhe, 2007). Research and practice pay little attention to how managers transfer their leadership knowing into leadership doing in organizations (Blume et al., 2010; Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000).

This study focuses on the transfer problem specifically in relation to managers' accumulated leadership knowing and thereby we introduce the *leadership knowing-doing gap*. Managers may accumulate leadership knowledge through various sources, including books, audios, and videos (Blanchard et al., 2007), experiences on the job (McCall, 2010; Van Velsor, McCauley, & Ruderman, 2010), or leadership development programs or practices, such as 360-degree feedback, coaching, mentoring, networking and action learning (Day, 2000). Although managers often report being enlightened through leadership learning, they do not necessarily transfer the leadership knowing that they accumulate over time into real leadership action in

practice (Conger, 2013; Johnstal, 2013). Their leadership knowing may remain an internalized or inactive potential (Quinn, Spreitzer, & Lam, 2012; Witt, 2003), thus limiting its value to managers and organizations (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000). This dormant or underutilized potential leadeship capacity could mean that managers initiate or implement fewer actions and changes in organizations (Blume, Ford, Baldwin, & Huang, 2010; Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000). Hence, an exploration of the leadership knowing-doing gap can benefit individuals and organizations.

We suggest that in research and practice, how managers utilize their leadership knowing and transfer it into leadership action largely remains a black box. First, the leadership learning literature typically neglects the follow-up to determine the impact of accumulated leadership knowing on the desired attitudes, behaviors, and performance of managers (Collins & Holton, 2004). While research exists on evaluating standalone leadership development interventions (Lester, Hannah, Harms, Vogelgesang, & Avolio, 2011; Militello & Benham, 2010; Richard, Holton, & Katsioloudes, 2014) or episodic leadership training (Johnstal, 2013; McCall, 2010; Warhurst, 2012), the extant literature overlooks the application of continuously accumulated leadership knowing from various sources (Day, 2011a). Moreover, the literature on experience-based leadership development primarily focuses on how and what to learn from developmental experiences, and less on how to apply the lessons learned from such experiences (McCall, 2010). Second, the lack of inquiry on the leadership knowing-doing gap may be exacerbated by the traditional misconception that holding formal leadership roles or positions in organizations inherently conveys or prescribes leadership behavior (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). Research and practice take for granted that managers holding such roles by definition apply what they know about leadership. Overall, the literature appears to focus more on building leadership knowledge

as an end in itself, while relatively little is known about gaps between knowing and doing leadeship (Conger, 2013).

To address this shortcoming, our empirical investigation aims to better understand the leadership knowing-doing gap phenomenon. Our qualitative study explores how and why managers experience discrepancies between their leadership knowing and actual leadership doing. We analyze 65 critical incidents from interviews with 22 managers in leadership roles across various organizational levels in the United Kingdom. We offer a definition and framework of the leadership knowing-doing gap, presenting it as a multifaceted, dynamic and complex experience involving individual cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements. We discuss dynamics of the leadership knowing-doing gap, as well as potential underlying factors influencing the gap. In doing so, we discuss the role of the context in which managers operate in the transfer of their leadership knowing into leadership doing.

Our proposed definition and framework is to our knowledge the first to put forward an understanding of the leadership knowing-doing gap. We enhance the understanding of the phenomenon for future theory building and empirical research in both management learning and leadership development. We advance specifically the literature on leadership learning transfer (e.g. Conger, 2013; Warhurst, 2012) and more broadly on management learning transfer (e.g. Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Blume, Ford, Baldwin, & Huang, 2010), first by introducing a definition and conceptualization of the leadership knowing-doing gap, illuminating how transfer gaps occur specifically within leadership, and second by shedding light into potential individual and contextual factors that can influence learning transfer motivations and decisions.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

To position our exploration of the leadership knowing-doing gap phenomenon within

existing literature, we draw on the literature on leadership knowing; leadership doing; and the gap between leadership knowing and leadership doing. From this, we call for a shift in focus from how managers accumulate leadership knowing and what leadership doing entails, to investigating how and why managers transfer (or not) their leadership knowing into doing.

Leadership Knowing

Building on literature on what knowledge is (Akbar, 2003; Lee, 2020) and how leadership is developed (Day, Fleenor, Atwater, Sturm, & McKee, 2014; Vogel, Reichard, Batistič, & Černe, 2021), we view leadership knowing as involving leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities (Day & Dragoni, 2015; Schippmann et al., 2000), encompassing both intrapersonal and interpersonal leadership capabilities (Day, 2011b; Day et al., 2014). Leadership knowing can also consist of different types of knowledge, such as know-what (cognitive knowledge), know-how (advanced skills), know-why (systems understanding), and care-why (motivation) (Lee, 2020; Quinn, Anderson, & Finkelstein, 1996). We view the accumulation of leadership knowing as "the expansion of a person's capacity to be effective in leadership roles and processes" (Van Velsor, McCauley, & Ruderman, 2010: 2).

The extant literature tells us that managers may accumulate leadership knowing from various sources over time. While leadership knowing can be acquired through leadership development practices embedded in the job (Hannah & Avolio, 2010; Kark, 2011), such as 360-degree feedback, coaching, mentoring, and networking (Day, 2000), managers may accumulate leadership knowing through informal learning via books, audios, and videos (Blanchard et al., 2007), as well as ongoing experiences on the job (Day, 2011a; McCall, 2010), or life experiences beyond the workplace (Reichard, Serrano, Condren, Wilder, Dollwet, & Wang, 2015). Drawing on adult development and the premise that continuous deliberate practice is necessary to develop

expert performance in a given field (Ericsson & Charness, 1994), developing leadership knowing may involve "a continuous process associated with the human development trajectory" (O'Connell, 2014: 185). Yet, a manager's extended leadership capacity can be an internalized potential that is inactive or underutilized (Quinn et al., 2012; Witt, 2003) and this knowing may not necessarily transfer into actual leadership doing. Hence, we propose to focus empirical work on the transfer of leadership knowing into leadership doing, as the enactment of leadership is crucial for successful leadership development (Day, 2000; Johnstal, 2013).

Leadership Doing

Drawing on the concepts of knowledge-in-use (de Jong & Ferguson-Hessler, 1996), applied management knowledge (Baldwin et al., 2011), and the enactment of leadership functions as leadership behavior (Ford, Ford, & Polin, 2014), we frame leadership doing as managers' use and application of their leadership knowing as leadership behavior. Leadership behavior is one of the central mechanisms of leadership (Hernandez, Eberly, Avolio, & Johnson, 2011; McClean, Barnes, Courtright, & Johnson, 2019). We suggest that managers may bridge gaps between their leadership knowing and leadership doing through proactive or active enactment (Fondas & Stewart, 1994; Hochwarter & Thompson, 2012) of their leadership knowing, thereby transferring their intrapersonal and interpersonal leadership knowledge, skills, and abilities into actual leadership behavior.

We do not focus on any specific set of effective leadership behaviors in defining leadership doing. There is a lack of consensus in the leadership literature around the types of behavior that leadership entails (Behrendt, Matz, & Göritz, 2017; Yukl, 2012), as leadership has been studied from diverse theoretical perspectives, research paradigms and levels of analyses, resulting in a wide array of leadership definitions (Dinh, Lord, Gardner, Meuser, Liden, & Hu,

2014; Hernandez et al., 2011). Research shows that in different operating environments different leadership behaviors can be effective (Peus, Braun, & Frey, 2013; Vroom & Jago, 2007; Yukl, 2012). In our aim to understand the transfer (or not) of leadership knowing into leadership doing, and recognizing that managers' leadership behavior is dynamic and can vary within- and between- person (McClean et al., 2019) and across situations (Kleshinski, Schwind Wilson, Stevenson-Street, & Scott, 2021), the main interest in this research is on the use and application of leadership knowing as leadership behavior, rather than the impact of enacting leadership behavior for leadership effectiveness.

Turning leadership knowing into leadership doing may revolve around applying lessons learned from a leadership learning source or developmental experience to other similar or different experiences, or from the experience of the individual to the organizational context (Johnstal, 2013; McCall, 2010). In our exploration we extend beyond the transfer of leadership training (e.g. Conger, 2013; Johnstal, 2013) such as through short-term leadership development programs (Day, 2000) and aim for understanding a broader transfer of ongoing leadership learning through various sources and experiences. This deviates from the common tendency to take an episodic view of development (Day, 2011; Hirst, Mann, Bain, Pirola-Merlo, & Richver, 2004), as the leadership challenges that managers face in real contexts may be far more complex than those covered in short-term training practices (Day et al., 2014).

The Leadership Knowing-Doing Gap

While previous literature highlights the value of studying the transfer of leadership learning to the workplace (e.g., Conger, 2013; Johnson, Garrison, Hernez-Broome, Fleenor, & Steed, 2012; Johnstal, 2013), research within this arena remains limited. Reviews of the broader management training literature (e.g., Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Blume et al., 2010) provide

frameworks for the transfer of learning from training back to the work context. This literature focuses on studying training input factors (such as trainee characteristics, training design, or work environment), paying relatively little attention to the conditions of training transfer regarding (a) generalization: the degree to which learning from a training experience is generalized back to work and applied in different contexts and situations; and (b) maintenance: the extent to which the use of learning is maintained, and the resulting changes from learning continue over time (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Blume et al., 2010).

As an initial framing for our study, we define the leadership knowing-doing gap as an experience in which managers possess knowledge about leadership (e.g. knowing what leadership entails, how to engage in leadership, and in which situations), yet do not fully transfer their leadership knowing into leadership doing. Seeking a deeper understanding of the leadership knowing-doing gap phenomenon, this research explores how and why managers experience discrepancies in transferring their leadership knowing into leadership doing.

The leadership knowing-doing gap challenge concerns managers and organizations alike. The literature on leader cognition looks at how people think about leadership (e.g., DeRue & Ashford, 2010; Lord & Hall, 2005; Zaar, Van Den Bossche, & Gijselaers, 2020), and how they think about certain leadership events or challenges (e.g., Mumford, Friedrich, Caughron, & Byrne, 2007). It suggests that managers may be at different levels of developmental readiness (Hannah & Avolio, 2010), with different individual needs and job demands at a particular time (Guillén & Ibarra, 2010). Therefore, they may differ in their "ability and motivation to attend to, make meaning of, and appropriate new leader KSAAs (knowledge, skills, abilities and attributes) into knowledge structures along with concomitant changes in identity to employ those KSAAs" (Hannah and Avolio, 2010, p. 1182). On the other hand, organizations may also vary in the

extent to which they are receptive to applying new leadership insights at work (Ely, Boyce, Nelson, Zaccaro, Hernez-Broome, & Whyman, 2010). They may differ for instance in the level of psychological safety, learning culture, and support (Hannah & Avolio, 2010) that may bolster or hinder the transfer of leadership knowing into leadership doing. Organizational characteristics and conditions and every day work situations can also for instance initiate or influence the emotions of managers, which in turn can have an impact on their attitudes and behaviors (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Thus, the context in which managers operate plays a role in shaping their cognition, emotions and behavior and as a result can have an impact on leadership knowing-doing gap experiences.

Previous leadership literature highlights the importance of the context in influencing leadership behavior (Antonakis, Avolio, & Sivasubramaniam, 2003; Porter & McLaughlin, 2006), as well as the transfer of learning into practice more generally (Fiedler, 1996; Johnstal, 2013). Similarly, the management learning literature suggests that work environment characteristics can shape the transfer of training back on the job (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Blume et al., 2010; Ford & Kraiger, 1995). Yet, it is not clear what specific attributes of context may enhance or inhibit the transfer of leadership learning on the job. Therefore, in our exploration of how and why managers experience the leadership knowing-doing gap, we take into account the potential role of the context in supporting or hindering the transfer of leadership knowing into leadership doing.

METHODOLOGY

We employed an inductive qualitative strategy (Silverman, 2010) utilizing a phenomenological approach (Moustakas, 1994). Phenomenology justifies the reality of the fact-world through “a phenomenological analysis of actual experiences” (Pivčević, 1970: 14). This

allowed us to look at how individuals describe and interpret their experiences and the world around them (Moran, 2000). We followed the stages of phenomenological research as suggested by Moustakas (1994) (explained below), reflecting Husserl's descriptive phenomenology (Gill, 2014). In doing so, we utilized the process of epoché, i.e., setting aside our biases and prejudgments (Moustakas, 1994) in order to be open to new ideas as participants describe their experiences of the focal phenomenon (Crotty, 1996). We used in-depth qualitative interviewing for data collection (Cassell & Symon, 1994) and analytic induction for data analysis (Bryman & Bell, 2007) to develop our proposed framework.

Sample

We utilized purposive sampling in the form of criterion sampling (Patton, 2002) as is commonly done in the phenomenological tradition (Kuzel, 1999). Moustakas (1994) suggests that specific criteria for selecting the sample are that participants have either experienced the phenomenon or are interested in its meanings. We therefore approached managers who reported having leadership experience (for instance within teams, departments, or divisions) and expressed a willingness to share their views on discrepancies between leadership knowing and leadership doing. Given that the phenomenological approach aims to to analyze various ways in which individuals may experience the leadership knowing-doing gap, we identified participants from diverse leadership roles and contexts to gain a greater breadth of understanding from a variety of perspectives.

We interviewed 22 managers in the United Kingdom, which is at the higher end of guidelines on sample size for phenomenological studies (Creswell, 2012; Klenke, 2008; Kuzel, 1999). Participants were drawn from a variety of industries (financial services, automotive, construction, manufacturing, and FMCG). They held leadership roles ranging from middle management (12 participants) to senior management (10 participants). We elicited participants'

views on what leadership means to them, recognizing that leadership does not require a formal hierarchical position (Grint, 2010), and that not all managers are leaders (Bedeian & Hunt, 2006; Kotter, 1990). As most participants were both leaders and followers, we asked them to think of their roles as leaders during interviews. The span of leadership influence of participants ranged from 1 to 80 people (averaging 16 people). The average leadership experience among participants in leadership positions overall was 11 years (ranging between 1.5 years and 20 years), and in their current positions was approximately 3 years (with a range between 1 month and 4 years). The sample consisted of 12 male and 10 female participants, with an age range of 35 to 55 years. Interviews were 60 to 90 minutes in length and were audio-recorded and transcribed.

Data Collection

We conducted semi-structured interviews (Bogdan & Taylor, 1975) and used critical incident questioning (Chell, 2004) to explore situations in which participants referred to experiencing the transfer (or not) of leadership knowing into leadership doing. Interview questions were mostly open-ended, encouraging interviewees to answer descriptively (Patton, 2002). Interviews commenced with broad questions aimed at setting the scene for the participants' understanding of leadership knowing and leadership doing (e.g., "Thinking of your role as a leader, how did you learn leadership over time?" and "Could you please think of five leadership behaviors that you think are important for effective leadership in organizations?"). As leadership conceptualizations differ widely (Batistič, Černe, & Vogel, 2017; Dansereau, Seitz, Chiu, Shaughnessy, & Yammarino, 2013; Hernandez et al., 2011), we elicited each participant's understanding of leadership (Bryman, 1995) to understand the topic from the perspective of those involved (Moustakas, 1994; Rubin & Rubin, 2005) instead of imposing a leadership definition. The main body of questions discerned participants' experiences of discrepancies

between leadership knowing and leadership doing (e.g., "How does the knowing-doing gap manifest itself in your context of leadership?"). Critical incident questions (Chell, 2004) probed interviewees to recount incidents of discrepancies between leadership knowing and leadership doing (e.g., "Please tell me about a time when you feel you may have experienced a leadership knowing-doing gap"). We asked follow up questions to tap into further depth on the incidents shared ("e.g., "What stood in the way of your leadership doing?" and "What helped you enact leadership?"). The 22 interviews yielded 65 incidents that expressed a discrepancy between leadership knowing and leadership doing.

Data Analysis

We followed Moustakas (1994) for stages of phenomenological data analysis and integrated ideas for first and second coding cycles (Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014), and phenomenological thematic analysis (Crotty, 1996; Parameshwar, 2005) for our coding process. The first stage was horizonalization to determine the invariant constituents. This starts by listing all statements that are relevant to the phenomenon being studied, and are therefore the horizons of the participants' experiences (Moustakas, 1994). We identified in each interview transcript all the statements that are relevant to our research question. We then reduced the data by eliminating any repetitive or unclear statements. The remaining horizons are the invariant constituents of the experience (Moustakas, 1994).

This involved bracketing and phenomenological reduction; suspending past knowledge and any prejudgments to try to see the phenomenon as it is experienced by participants. It required us to cautiously free ourselves as much as possible from prior knowledge and assumptions about the leadership knowing-doing gap, which we hope allowed us to receive the data without biases. This is an ideal that can be difficult to achieve in reality (Moustakas, 1994; Zaner 1970). However, it does not necessitate standing completely outside of the phenomenon,

but rather being aware of and critical about one's involvement within it, to maintain openness that would allow the phenomenon to present itself as it really is (Gibson, 2004).

The second stage of data analysis focused on thematizing the remaining statements. This involved reading through the invariant constituents again and over again, to code particularistic aspects of the leadership knowing-doing gap experiences for each participant. This resembled first cycle data coding and within-case analysis (Gioia et al., 2013; Miles et al., 2014) or vertical analysis (Parameshwar, 2005). We started by labeling and color-coding themes on a Microsoft Word file for each interview transcript. The labels given to themes retained the original language of participants in order to maintain the descriptive element of transcendental phenomenology and not impose our interpretation on the data at this stage. We then validated all identified themes against the complete record for each participant to ensure they are explicitly expressed or compatible with the participant's experience (Moustakas, 1994).

The third stage involved clustering themes across the interviews, looking for the recurring or universal aspects of the leadership knowing-doing gap experiences, which to some extent reflected second cycle pattern coding and cross-case analysis (Gioia et al., 2013; Miles et al., 2014) or horizontal analysis (Parameshwar, 2005). At this point we transferred all Microsoft Word files and coded themes onto NVivo, to help with clustering themes across all interviews based on similarities and differences in what they constituted. We checked and re-checked clusters to ensure that each cluster accurately represented its respective individual themes.

The final stage involved sorting the clusters of data into analytic categories and aggregate dimensions (Gioia et al., 2013) to form our proposed framework. The challenge of epoché and phenomenological reduction here is to begin to reconstruct the world and rediscover it once it has been put in "brackets" (Pivčević, 1970). Determining the labels for analytic categories and

aggregate dimensions involved interpreting the clusters to sort and dress them in a language relevant to our research question (Klenke, 2008). From a phenomenological standpoint, the language and structure of the researcher's discipline form the basis on which findings of the study are written (Giorgi, 1997). To limit potential bias, we asked participants to elaborate further during interviews on any points raised that may be susceptible to interpretation. We took what participants reported at face value throughout data collection and the previous data analysis stages, interpreting their descriptions largely in this final stage of analysis to generate findings.

While the process of qualitative data analysis is not always linear and involves continuous cycles of re-reading and re-sorting the data, Tables 1 and 2 present simplified examples to illustrate the stages that we followed.

- Insert Table 1 about here -

- Insert Table 2 about here -

FINDINGS

This section presents similarities as well as nuanced differences to capture individual, typical, and universal understandings (Klenke, 2008) of the leadership knowing-doing gap phenomenon and its dynamics and underlying factors for this sample. This lays the foundation on which we build the proposed framework that conceptualizes the leadership knowing-doing gap as a multifaceted, dynamic and complex phenomenon, as presented in Figure 1.

- Insert Figure 1 about here -

Dynamics of the Leadership Knowing-Doing Gap

While each of the 65 incidents that expressed a discrepancy between leadership knowing and leadership doing was a unique experience, a broad distinction emerged from the critical incident descriptions, pertaining to different stages of the leadership knowing-doing gap. 34

incidents expressed how the gap was created or widened, and 31 incidents revolved around how the gap was prevented or closed. The leadership knowing-doing gap therefore reflects a dynamic rather than a static experience. This is further illustrated in the following findings.

Awareness of the Leadership Knowing-Doing Gap

Managers are not always aware of their leadership knowing-doing gap in the moment. When asked how the leadership knowing-doing gap presents itself in the context of leadership (e.g., asking, "How does it manifest?"), two clusters emerged. One cluster showed descriptions of the gap as an experience that participants are aware of. A second emerged as a gap that they are not aware of in the moment, but become aware of over time through reflection or feedback.

Almost all participants (20 of 22) described the leadership knowing-doing gap as a phenomenon they can be conscious and aware of in the moment. These descriptions revolved around knowing for instance what leadership behavior is needed in a situation, or how and when to enact it, but choosing not to act upon that knowledge. One participant stated: "In some cases, it is a conscious decision… I would consciously decide not to do it [leadership behavior]" (Interview 11). Another participant commented:

> *"I know when I've dodged a [leadership] situation because I don't really want to confront it, and I know when I've acted in a way that probably wasn't particularly good… I'm aware of my own [leadership] actions and their effects on other people. I would know if I had not behaved in a way that I think I ought to." (Interview 1)*

On the other hand, half of the participants (11 of 22) revealed that even when the leadership knowing-doing gap may exist, they may not immediately be aware of it in the moment. A theme emerged when participants referred to subconsciously deciding to act in contradiction with their leadership knowing. The following comment conveys this notion:

"We would know in our own minds that there's an ideal way of behaving [in terms of leadership], but I don't think anyone on this earth would probably say they actually behave in an ideal way all the time… subconscious decision to do something or not to do something." (Interview 21)

Becoming Aware of the Gap. Managers can become aware of the leadership knowing-doing gap through different mechanisms. When asked how they became aware of their leadership knowing-doing gap (e.g., asking, "How did you notice it?"), two themes surfaced that demonstrate how managers noticed the gap. Many participants' (14 of 22) talked about reflection as a useful cognitive process for self-awareness and becoming aware of the gap. One participant shared: "The gap is often there and I might not notice it till the end of the day, when I'm reflecting on my way home thinking, 'Yeah, I avoided that'" (Interview 3). Another participant commented:

"I have a long journey into work, so I'm in the car for about an hour and a half to two hours; that's my reflection time. That has made a difference from me becoming a manager into more of a leader… self-awareness and thinking, 'What is it like to be on the receiving end of me today?'" (Interview 4)

Just under half of the participants' (10 of 22) responses surfaced the theme of feedback from others as another way of raising awareness of the gap. For example, one participant commented: "360 [feedback] was blunt, it was brilliant and done in such a constructive way… helped me know that I was doing it…" (Interview 14). Feedback can also be helpful to encourage reflection, as one participant illustrated:

"They [team members] gave me really good feedback… which did make me reflect back and go, 'Mmm, actually I haven't done them any favors at all, have I?'… It [the gap] was unconscious… It was my first leadership role… I just so desperately wanted to succeed

and be all, 'Our trackers are all green and we're all great', I'd put no thought into how I went about doing that... until I took time to stop and reflect, and with that feedback think, "No, I need to do things differently here.'" (Interview 2)

In summary, while managers may not notice the leadership knowing-doing gap in the moment, they can become aware of it over time through reflection and feedback.

Affective States in Experiences of the Leadership Knowing-Doing Gap

The leadership knowing-doing gap can be an emotional experience for managers. When asked how they felt about the leadership knowing-doing gap incidents, (e.g., asking, "How did you feel about the incident at the time?"), a range of feelings emerged. These were clustered into negative and positive affect based on how participants described these as context-specific affective states in the incidents shared.

Negative Affect. Experiencing the leadership knowing-doing gap can trigger negative feelings, as expressed by nearly three quarters of the participants (16 of 22). Frustration emerged as a theme, as several participants (14 of 22) referred to feeling "frustrated" or "irritated" when a gap is created or widened. As one participant put it: "A bit of frustration… Annoyed with myself when I know I should actually be acting in one way or doing something in a certain way and I don't" (Interview 21). Guilt emerged as another theme, highlighted by two participants. One participant referred to their gap of not spending enough time with a team member who needed support: "I felt guilty… I felt as though I'd let him [team member] down" (Interview 2).

On the other hand, two participants revealed negative affect related to incidents of a prevented or closed leadership knowing-doing gap, demonstrating that negative feelings can also emerge as managers attempt to enact leadership to address their gaps. One participant mentioned feeling "nervous" when engaging more proactively with stakeholders. Through feedback about

the need to do so, the participant recognized the demand yet felt nervous about trying to address their discrepancy. The participant commented:

> *"[I felt] very, very nervous. I didn't like the idea of it [leadership behavior to close the gap – proactive communication with stakeholders] but it was the right thing to do. The right thing to do as a leader, the right thing to do for the organization." (Interview 06)*

Discomfort emerged from the response of another participant who felt "uncomfortable" when enacting leadership to close a leadership knowing-doing gap that involved communicating with team members more often. The participant was made aware of this knowing-doing gap through feedback from team members. The participant described the incident as follows:

> *"I think I felt a little uncomfortable about it [communicating more often with my team] at first… I felt like I was forcing it… When it comes to my team, I want the right atmosphere… a good team environment. If that means me having to come out of my shell a little bit in a different way, then I'll do that if I think it's appropriate" (Interview 17)*

Positive Affect. Managers may not necessarily experience displeasurable feelings in incidents of the gap. One participant expressed positive affect despite awareness of a discrepancy between leadership knowing and doing. This participant mentioned feeling "great" when delegating leadership actions that they do not find motivating: "… You deliberately find other people around you who like doing that [leadership action] and ask them to do it for you" (Interview 10).

The cluster of positive affect surfaced in incidents of a prevented or closed gap from over three quarters of participants (17 of 22). Half of the participants (11 of 22) referred to happiness and satisfaction. One participant shared: "When it [the gap incident] had all finished, I felt really great" (Interview 4). Another participant conveyed feeling good about closing a leadership

knowing-doing gap when giving team members negative feedback privately as opposed to publicly:

> *"It [closing the knowing-doing gap] makes me know that I'm doing things right… gives you self-satisfaction that you've changed something for the better… inner belief that you're prepared to do something differently." (Interview 2)*

The theme of relief and comfort for closing the gap also emerged from some participants (6 of 22), with comments like: "It felt so relaxed and calm" (Interview 11) and "It was a sense of relief for me" (Interview 20). One participant described how changing the way they viewed leadership towards individualized consideration of people's developmental needs was "a release of frustration", commenting:

> *"It [closing the knowing-doing gap] has been a long journey… I feel very comfortable in my own leadership skin… really rewarding… when you actually see people, who you have enabled to perform excellently… I find seeing people flourish more exciting than seeing a business flourish." (Interview 10)*

A final theme of pride for closing the gap emerged from two participants. In one incident of addressing a discrepancy between leadership knowing and doing, a participant took pride in taking action beyond the realm of their responsibility and comfort zone. The participant said:

> *"I felt quite strong… I felt quite proud because I felt I'd challenged it [the knowing-doing gap] in a really constructive and effective way. I know that I did it for the right reasons… so I felt that I came from a position of strength because I understood what the problem was and I was able to help…" (Interview 8)*

Responses to Address the Leadership Knowing-Doing Gap

As managers become aware of the leadership knowing-doing gap, their responses to address the issue can vary. When asked how they respond to address the leadership knowing-

doing gap (e.g., asking "When you notice it, how do you respond to it?"), two clusters emerged. The first refered to determining a response to address the gap in the future, while the second pointed to enacting a response to address the gap in the moment. This demonstrates the disparity in managers' responses to address their gaps and a potential time lag for some between becoming aware of a gap and enacting leadership to address it.

Determining a Response to Address the Gap in the Future. The majority of participants (19 of 22) indicated determining a response to address a discrepancy in leadership knowing and doing in the future. One participant commented: "I always take time to reflect on situations… make a note like 'Next time, be careful of this [gap]'" (Interview 18). Another participant stated:

> *"I would know if I had not behaved in a way that I think I ought to, and then I would probably just go away and ponder on it quietly and make amends next time… I wouldn't like to think I'm the sort of leader or person that would just keep making the same mistakes again and again…" (Interview 21)*

In addition to describing reflection as a way of becoming aware of the leadership knowing-doing gap, participants spoke about the importance of reflection to think of the course of action to close the gap. Participants mentioned they find it helpful to "retract and think" or "go back and reflect" to determine a future response to the gap. One participant illustrated this as follows:

> *"I go for a run and reflect and think about it, and make a decision on, 'Yeah, this is definitely the right thing', so there's also a soul searching…" (Interview 11)*

Participants also pointed to the need for problem solving to determine an appropriate future course of action, with comments like: "Think about what I need to do differently" and

determining “the right way to go” or “the right thing to do” and “address it at the right time”. As one participant commented:

> *“What I try to do is work out ‘What is the gap?’ And try and think of a solution… propose it and see what happens” (Interview 14)*

Thus, not only is there a time lag between the gap happening and managers becoming aware of it, there is also often a delay in determining the right way forward to address the gap.

Enacting a Response to Address the Gap in the Present. Just under half of the participants (10 of 22) talked about enacting leadership immediately in the moment when aware of instances of the gap, with comments like: “I wouldn’t hold back on doing any of that [leadership behavior]”. For example, one participant described a concern for getting too involved as leader when they knew they needed to step away and empowering others to take ownership of tasks. As soon as the participant noticed this discrepancy between their leadership knowing and doing, they admitted it and changed their behavior in the situation, stating, “I can be apologetic and say, ‘I’m really sorry, but I’ve kind of got involved in X, and I know I shouldn’t have done this’”. Similarly, another participant commented:

> *“You can usually tell by somebody’s expression whether they’re on board with you or whether you’ve upset them, and at that time it’s then to stop... and deal with it then, but you see a lot of people won’t, they’ll carry on. And it’s that, ‘Actually, I’m sorry, it was never my intention to do that, let’s talk about it’... Some leaders will not admit they’re wrong, will not say they’re sorry... When we’re all human, and we all make mistakes.” (Interview 4)*

The theme of telling others surfaced as three participants shared they informed others of their action to close the gap in order to carry it through instantly. One participant said: “I will

vocally tell them [team members] what I'm not good at, I will show them my 360 [feedback], I don't hide anything" (Interview 15). Another participant commented:

> *"Sometimes I solidify the determination to do it [close the gap] by telling others. So I'll tell some of my peers, if I'm really scared then I'll tell my boss. If I tell him that I have to do it… it sort of piles a bit of pressure on." (Interview 11)*

Overall, participants distinguished between addressing the leadership knowing-doing gap in the future and in the moment. Reflection and problem solving are key in determining the right course of action, whilst admitting shortcomings and sharing with others the intention to address the gap can support in immediately closing the gap.

Factors Influencing the Leadership Knowing-Doing Gap

The findings so far have surfaced how managers experience discrepancies between their leadership knowing and leadeship doing. Here we focus on individual and contextual factors that interplay to influence the leadership knowing-doing gap. When asked about what supported or hindered the transfer of leadership knowing into leadership doing in the incidents shared (e.g., asking "What stood in the way of your leadership doing?", "what helped you enact leadership" and "what helped you successfully close the gap"?), motivation, prioritization, and confidence emerged as personal factors influencing the leadership knowing-doing gap. Participants also spoke about how the broader context in which they operate impacted their motivation, prioritization and confidence to enact leadership, highlighting the role of hierarchy, organizational priorities, and empowerment in their context. The following section presents findings on the individual-level factors, illustrating how contextual-level conditions impacted each of those.

Motivation. The motivation to lead, or the lack of it, emerged as a factor that impacts the gap between their leadership knowing and actual leadership doing, as mentioned by eight

participants. First, in descriptions of a created or widened discrepancy between leadership knowing and doing, lack of motivation surfaced as a cluster. Some participants (6 of 22) mentioned an absence of "willingness" to lead, with phrases such as "I don't want to", "I'm not interested", "no appetite for it", and a lack of "energy" to engage in leadership, with descriptions such as "a complete lack of energy towards it [leadership] and "I'll avoid it". Most descriptions on the lack of motivation were at the individual level regarding participants' own lack of willingness and energy to lead. One participant shared:

> *"My natural style and my natural motivation isn't actually in that [leadership] zone. You have to actually force yourself to do it [leadership]… I know that I should start doing [leadership], but actually I'll find excuses to ride with some other things…" (Interview 10)*

Hierarchy emerged as a contextual factor that can influence individual motivation. One participant talked about the rigidity of the context in which they operate as a hindrance to their motivation to enact leadership, stating, "It's quite a tight framework, sometimes I feel like I don't have enough room within the rules to really blossom… Just stay in the box and never question anything" (Interview 19). Another participant illustrated the impact of their organization's formal hierarchy on their motivation to speak up, thereby widening their leadership knowing-doing gap. This example was conveyed as follows:

> *"… Culture of the organization, the hierarchical nature… trying to move from a kind of top down approach, and the readiness to receive challenge or feedback… I don't feel personally that our environment is there yet… that had a big impact upon why I chose deliberately not to speak up and push the point and take the lead… will I actually be able to make a difference?... or will I just be told 'this is what you should do'?" (Interview 22)*

On the other hand, four participants talked about how their motivation helped in enacting leadership to prevent or close a gap. These descriptions referred to their "motivation to change" with phrases like "wanting to change", as well as their "drive" with comments such as the "drive to do it". One participant stated: "If it's something I think is really important… if I believe in it, I have to really think through the route to get there" (Interview 3). Another participant indicated motivation as a driver for closing their leadership knowing-doing gap as follows:

> *I just physically felt "oh no, I've done wrong, and I want to make it right" because I want my team to also feel good and feel that they are appreciated… because I am only as successful as the people around me." (Interview 19)*

The motivation to bridge the leadership knowing-doing gap can be driven by both the individual and the context, as one participant stated:

> *"A lot of it [leadership] is down to individuality… That inner belief, motivation, drive to do it differently. Sometimes you might get told to do things differently, so it might be imposed on you, some of it through feedback, some of it comes from an individual motivation to change." (Interview 2)*

Prioritization. Prioritizing leadership, or the lack of it, emerged as another factor influencing the leadership knowing-doing gap, as shared by several participants (15 of 22). First, in descriptions of a created or widened gap, they spoke about the impact of not prioritizing time to engage in leadership. The theme of time constraints surfaced with phrases such as "time restraints" and "I just don't have the time [for leadership]". Nearly half of participants (10 of 22) shared that while they possessed the willingness to enact leadership, the lack of "time" stood as a barrier to leadership doing, which then became less of a "priority". One participant stated: "The demand of

time… I need to stop that happening before I go out to engage in leadership" (Interview 10). Another participant illustrated this notion as follows:

> *"I only had a certain window to do some stuff, and I had many things to do, it [leadership] became one of my lesser priorities." (Interview 3)*

The theme of "workload" emerged as some participants (7 of 22) described how the "day-to-day volume and workload" and "work pressure" can be a challenge for leadership doing, as leadership can get to the "back of the agenda". One participant commented: "I've got a million things to do… prioritization" and therefore task delivery outweighed people satisfaction in their leadership, indicated as follows: "At the moment seeing things like projects not delivering on time is the highest priority, a higher priority than making sure all the team are happy all the time" (Interview 14). Therefore, even when the motivation to enact leadership exists, workload might hinder prioritizing leadership. One participant illustrated this as follows:

> *"If I did the leadership behaviors, I know that I am going to cause myself pain because I am going to have to stay behind late or take my laptop home at weekends. If I didn't do the leadership, I could have answered my emails, but then there's a gap in not doing leadership… It's not appetite to do it… It's the sheer volume of work." (Interview 2)*

Whether or not a manager prioritizes leadership doing can be driven by the context in which they operate. Several participants (8 of 22) described "time" and "priorities" as barriers posed by their contexts. One participant commented: "You could be under different amounts of pressure, whether that be time or other external influences" (Interview 5). Another participant highlighted that such pressure comes from different stakeholders in their context:

"Different stakeholders demanding that you do things… Some of them threats, either implicit or explicit… You have regulators, auditors, staff teams, there's all sorts of demands on time." (Interview 10)

Others indicated that their organizations did not prioritize leadership, which in turn impacted their own prioritization for leadership. One participant stated: "We haven't placed any focus and therefore value on leadership and what exactly it means in this organization" (Interview 1). Another participant talked about conflicting priorities across their organization and the need for prioritizing leadership at the top to support their leadership doing, illustrating:

"My career, as a leader, has been a rocky journey… Challenged me in terms of how I lead a team, how I lead a business area, and how I dealt with the conflicting priorities… Different priorities and organizational measurements... The leadership team above me, doesn't perform as a leadership team at all. They are individuals who share a bit of information and come away. I would choose the priorities that are purposeful, that I can make a difference with. And that [leadership doing] will just be there, nagging." (Interview 3)

On the other hand, in descriptions of a prevented or closed gap, five participants talked about the impact of prioritizing time to enact leadership. The theme of "focusing on leadership" emerged as four participants spoke about "re-programming" and the need to "re-prioritize" for leadership doing to become a priority. One participant talked about the need for "priority being balanced between how people feel about their work, and the task being complete", adding: "I try to focus on it [leadership] for the value it can add" (Interview 1). Another participant suggested that they closed the leadership knowing-doing gap with a personal decision to shift leadership up on their priority list, stating:

"That was from me inside… I decided that that [leadership doing] was high on my agenda. It was nagging at me all the time… I spoke to the regional manager and said I needed more support [to be able to prioritize leadership.]" (Interview 7)

Two participants pointed to the theme of "time management", highlighting the need to "set time aside", "re-orientate" and "re-organize" to re-prioritize leadership doing. One participant suggested: "I'd put time in my diary [for leadership]…" and then added: "The volume of work, I don't think you would be able to change that. It's just how you deal with that as an individual, time management" (Interview 2).

Confidence. The confidence to enact leadership, or the lack of it, also influences the leadership knowing-doing gap, as indicated by half of the participants (11 of 22). In describing incidents of a created or widened leadership knowing-doing gap, the lack of confidence emerged as a cluster. Some participants (7 of 22) referred to the lack of confidence in their ability to lead, with phrases like "I didn't have the ability" and "confidence in yourself" to enact leadership, as well as the "need for reassurance" with comments such as "I don't feel confident, so I need the reassurance" and "hold back and want reassurance". One participant shared: "I ought to do it [leadership], but think 'I'm no good at that'" (Interview 1). Another participant commented: "I don't have what it takes to do that [leadership], so I'm not going to" (Interview 19).

The context in which managers operate can impact their confidence to enact leadership. Some descriptions on the lack of confidence pointed to participants' contexts that lack "empowerment". Participants shared aspects such as "managers not wanting to let go, senior managers not empowering their people" (Interview 12) and "your leader has to have that empowerment approach of letting people just get on and do what they know… giving people that confidence" (Interview 17).

On the other hand, three participants talked about how their confidence helped them to prevent or close the leadership knowing-doing gap, with phrases such as "the confidence to take responsibility" and "the confidence that you're doing the right thing". One participant shared:

> *"I'm very confident in coming forward and taking [leadership] action, taking responsibility to say 'yes, I can do that [leadership]'." (Interview 8)*

Another participant indicated that leadership doing can in itself build confidence that breeds further leadership doing, stating: "The more you do [leadership], the more confident you get about doing the right thing" (Interview 17). Moreover, when talking about support for managers to strengthen their confidence to lead, participants suggested building safety in their context to enact leadership, with comments like "safe environment", "safe zone" and "learning culture". One participant recommended:

> *"What you want is some sort of constant reminder to people that it's okay to take a decision… If it's a mistake, as long as it's an honest mistake, then that's fine, that's how you learn. If you keep making the same honest mistake over and over again, that might be a slightly different issue. But we would rather a manager takes nine good [leadership] decisions and one not-so-good one than take no decisions at all… Some people need to stretch their comfort zone a little bit each time" (Interview 12).*

DISCUSSION AND PROPOSED FRAMEWORK

This section synthesizes the findings and builds our proposed framework on the leadership knowing-doing gap. Figure 1 presents the leadership knowing-doing gap as a multifaceted, dynamic and complex phenomenon, as explained below. It is multifaceted in that it involves an interplay of cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements. The framework shows the dynamics of creating or widening, and preventing or closing the gap, and represents the interplay

of cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements in shaping the leadership knowing-doing gap experience. Furthermore, the framework reflects the complexity of the leadership knowing-doing gap, illustrating the factors influencing the gap at the individual level that is situated within and impacted by the contextual level.

Cognition

From our findings on the awareness of the leadership knowing-doing gap, we indicate a cognitive element in the experience (see Figure 1). In our proposed framework, cognition reflects the possibilities of being aware or unaware of the leadership knowing-doing gap's existence, and the different ways of becoming cognitively aware of the gap, which in turn impact the dynamics of widening or closing the discrepancy. While the gap may manifest itself as a phenomenon that managers may notice and are able to identify, there are instances in which managers may be unaware of the gap in the moment. This means that even when discrepancies between leadership knowing and doing actually exist, managers may not notice such gaps at all times.

Our findings offer different mechanisms that can support becoming aware of the gap, namely interpersonal feedback and intrapersonal reflection. Feedback from others can encourage a manager to reflect on their behavior and become more aware of discrepancies between what they know and what they enact. This supports prior research suggesting that feedback in the workplace can contribute to the development of leadership (Warhurst, 2012) and the transfer of learning in organizations (Enos, Kehrhahn, & Bell, 2003). Studies show that 360-feedback can enhance self-awareness (Day & Dragoni, 2015) and help in tracking the application of leadership learning over a period of time (Conger, 2013). Likewise, our findings demonstrate that feedback practices can help managers become aware of potential discrepancies between their leadership knowing and doing. We also show that reflection enables managers to identify potential

leadership knowing-doing gaps, supporting the idea that reflective tools such as reflective learning journals can enhance the transfer of managers' leadership development in organizations (Brown, McCracken, & O'Kane, 2011). Overall, our findings on becoming aware of the leadership knowing-doing gap experience point to the dimension of cognition in Figure 1.

Affect

From our findings on the affective states in experiences of the leadership knowing-doing gap, we demonstrate that the leadership knowing-doing gap is an emotional experience. When participants reported on a created or widened gap, they mostly referred to negative affective states, and for a prevented or closed gap, they mostly pointed to positive affective states, with a few exceptions as shown. The feelings were context-specific and related to the incidents that participants shared on the leadership knowing-doing gap, and thus can be viewed as temporary affective states rather than stable traits (Izard, 1977). Moreover, it is possible that the participant who "felt great" despite a widening gap, and participants who experienced negative emotions like feeling "nervous" or "uncomfortable" when closing the gap, were able to regulate how they felt in these situations through cognitive reappraisal (Gross & John, 2003) to change the way they thought about the situations. Alternatively, emotion regulation also enables individuals to consciously or unconsciously influence which emotions they experience, in which situations and at which points in time (Bargh & Williams, 2007; Gross, 1998).

Overall, our findings on affective states point to the dimension of affect in our proposed framework (see Figure 1). The range of affective states that emerged represents the diversity of negative and positive emotions and moods found in workplace emotions research (Grandey, 2008). Affective events theory posits that every day work events (hassles and uplifts) are affective events in that they can initiate or influence the emotions of members, which in turn can

have an impact on their behaviors, attitudes and performance (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). Building on this, we suggest that the affective incidents of the leadership knowing-doing gap can influence how managers respond to address discrepancies between leadership knowing and leadership doing.

Behavior

From our findings on responses to address the leadership knowing-doing gap, we present behavior as a third element in our framework. We find that managers either reflect to determine a future response to the gap (cognitive element), or enact leadership to bridge the gap in the moment (behavioral element). Enacting a response in the future also reflects the behavioral element, as shown in Figure 1. We suggest these responses represent problem-solving coping approaches. In planning how to address the leadership knowing-doing gap, reflection is an important process and demonstrates that leaders' sense-making can be complex and take time, requiring leaders to think and search for answers to solve a challenge in the future (Combe & Carrington, 2015). Our findings also indicate that the interval between becoming aware of the gap and actually addressing may reflect the time taken for a manager to consolidate conceptual knowledge about the discrepancy between knowing and doing into procedural leadership behavior. On the other hand, enacting behavior immediately in the present is a faster problem-solving and coping strategy which can occur in the face of anxiety or stress (Hochwarter & Thompson, 2012), once a manager notices a discrepancy between leadership knowing and doing.

Different behavioral intentions may drive whether managers choose to immediately enact a response to the gap or defer a response to the near or far future. We show how even when managers possess the motivation to enact leadership, other individual and contextual factors can come into play, as we discuss further below. Those can in turn impact managers' perceived

behavioral control. The theory of planned behavior suggests that intentions coupled with perceived behavioral control can influence the variance in behavior (Ajzen, 1991). However, an individual's motivation to lead (Chan & Drasgow, 2001), whilst not operating in isolation, may shape their choice between immediately enacting leadership or delaying leadership behavior, indicating an interplay between cognition and behavior. Overall, findings on responses to address the leadership knowing-doing gap point to both a cognitive element and a behavioral element of the leadership knowing-doing gap experience, as presented in our framework (see Figure 1). Cognition is shown by reflection to cognitively determine future responses to the gap, whereas behavior is represented by the present or future behavioral enactment to address the gap.

Interplay of Cognition, Affect, and Behavior

Our framework sheds light on interplay of the trichotomy of thinking, feeling, and acting in the leadership knowing-doing gap, resembling the tripartite model of affect, behavior, and cognition (Breckler, 1984). The occurrence of cognition, affect, and behavior however does not necessarily follow a similar sequence across the incidents of the leadership knowing-doing gap experience, hence the multidirectional circular arrows in Figure 1. For instance, some incidents described by participants followed a cognition-affect-behavior sequence, whereby an awareness that the leadership knowing-doing gap exists (i.e., cognition) appears to be the first step in the experience, followed by feelings about the gap's incident (i.e., affect), which in turn triggers the behavioral response to the gap (i.e., behavior). On the other hand, in some instances managers experienced various emotions before becoming aware of the gap (e.g., feeling frustrated without realizing the frustration was related to the lack of leadership doing). Alternatively, feelings about the gap in some situations followed the behavioral response (e.g., enacting leadership to close the gap and then feeling good or feeling nervous about it).

Dynamism of the Leadership Knowing-Doing Gap

From our findings on the different dynamics of preventing and closing, or creating and widening the gap (see center of Figure 1), we suggest that given its dynamic nature, the extent of a manager's leadership knowing-doing gap may vary at different times and in different settings. Leadership is an open and interpersonal skill and as such allows managers freedom in terms of whether, how, and when to transfer their leadership learning to the job (Blume et al., 2010). In line with this, our study shows that a manager's leadership knowing-doing gap may vary in magnitude at different points in time, For example, in one situation, a manager might have a wide gap between what they know about leadership and what they actually do in terms of leadership enactment. In another situation, they might tap further into their leadership knowing and actively transfer it into leadership doing, thereby closing their leadership knowing-doing gap.

Interplay of Individual and Contextual Factors

The extent of the gap in these different situations can be shaped by managers' motivation, prioritization and confidence, which can also be impacted by the contextual conditions of hierarchy, organization priorities, and empowerment (see Figure 1). It follows from this that the magnitude of the leadership knowing-doing gap may vary among different managers and also within person across the experiences of an individual manager. This dynamism reflects the conditions of transfer, namely generalization and maintenance (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Blume et al., 2010) in that it illustrates that leadership knowing is not always generalized back to work and in different contexts or situations, and even when it is, generalization may not be maintained over time.

For instance, we find that individual and organizational priorities can stand in the way of transferring leadership knowing into doing. Thus, while managers may put in effort to apply their leadership learning, work demands may take priority over applying newly acquired knowledge (Hirst et al., 2004). Yet, our findings suggest that managing time and prioritizing leadership may also be an individual choice. Procrastination can be predicted by task averseness, task delay, organization and self-efficacy (Steel, 2007). We suggest that managers with higher motivation to lead (Chan & Drasgow, 2001) may be more likely to expend energy and manage their discipline in continuously prioritizing leadership and addressing any leadership knowing-doing gaps.

We also find that formal hierarchical structures that lack support from the top can be a barrier to managers' motivation to transfer leadership knowledge into leadership action. This complements the notion that supervisory support impacts learning transfer (Cheng & Hampson, 2008) through raising the motivation to transfer (Massenberg, Spurk, & Kauffeld, 2015). More broadly, the organizational transfer climate can affect the transfer of learning back to the job (Rouiller & Goldstein, 1993). Building on our findings, the transfer of leadership learning to the job is better supported in contexts where leadership learning goals are aligned with organizational goals and priorities (Johnstal, 2013). On the other hand, bureaucratic cultures and unsupportive leaders may hinder the motivation to lead and thereby undermine the transfer of leadership learning into practice (Conger, 2013).

Our findings suggest that the more confident the manager about their leadership knowledge, skills and abilities, the less likely they are to feel intimidated in contexts that lack empowerment, and the more likely they are to transfer their leadership knowing into leadership doing. Leadership self-efficacy relates to the individual's degree of confidence in their knowledge, skills, and abilities to lead others (Hannah, Avolio, Luthans, & Harms, 2008;

Hendricks & Payne, 2007), and has been found to raise an individual's motivation to lead (Chan & Drasgow, 2001; Day, Harrison, & Halpin, 2009). We demonstrate that greater leadership self-efficacy may influence more conversion of leadership knowing into leadership doing. While a supportive organizational climate for learning transfer offers the psychological safety for leaders to try their new leadership learning (Avolio et al., 2010), self-efficacy has been found to moderate the relationship between organizational culture and training transfer (Simosi, 2012).

Following from this discussion, we suggest that the leadership knowing-doing gap is complex in that the magnitude of the gap and the different dynamics of the leadership knowing-doing gap (a created or widened gap, and a prevented or closed gap) may be influenced by several individual factors and contextual conditions at any one time. For instance, a number of drivers may create or widen the leadership knowing-doing gap at the same time, such as a formal hierarchy coupled with a lack of motivation and confidence. Additionally, a context may simultaneously have helpful and unhelpful conditions for leadership enactment. For example, a context with supportive psychological safety and empowerment for transfer may also be one that is limiting in terms of time constraints and workload pressures that in turn inhibit the transfer of leadership knowledge into action. Moreover, a contextual condition that may be helpful in one situation could be unhelpful in another situation. For example, a support system for leadership may provide reassurance for managers to boost confidence to enact leadership. Yet, too much support may foster dependency that in turn creates or widens the gap between knowing and doing. Overall, our findings highlight the importance of accounting for such situational contingencies (Conger, 2013; Fiedler, 1996; Johnstal, 2013) on the transfer of leadership knowing into leadership enactment.

Our proposed framework in Figure 1 provides a comprehensive conceptualization of the leadership knowing-doing gap, capturing it as a multifaceted, dynamic and complex phenomenon. This advances our understanding of the leadership knowing-doing gap phenomenon and how and why it occurs.

CONTRIBUTIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

We define the leadership knowing-doing gap as a discrepancy between managers' leadership knowing and the extent to which they transfer it into leadership doing. With our framework in Figure 1 we advance this conceptualization by presenting the leadership knowing-doing gap as a multifaceted, dynamic and complex phenomenon. First, it is multifaceted in that it involves cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements that interplay in shaping the experience of the leadership knowing-doing gap. The cognitive element revolves around the awareness of the leadership knowing-doing gap in the moment or over time. Another cognitive element of the leadership knowing-doing gap experience involves reflection, both to become aware of the gap, as well as to determine a future response to address the gap. The affective element of the leadership knowing-doing gap is represented by the range of positive and negative affective states that managers may experiences in instances of the leadership knowing-doing gap. Finally, the behavioral element of the leadership knowing-doing gap is reflected in the various behavioral responses to address the gap by enacting leadership in the present or future. Second, the gap is dynamic in that it can vary in magnitude, widening and closing at different points in time. Third, the gap is complex in that it can be influenced by several individual factors, namely motivation, prioritization, and confidence, which can be shaped by contextual conditions, such as hierarchy, organization priorities, and empowerment.

Taken together, this research builds a foundation for our understanding of discrepancies between what managers know about leadership and what they actually enact as leadership behavior, and how and why the gaps may occur. Insights from this study form a conceptualization of the leadership knowing-doing gap that enhances the potential of identifying and operationalizing such an experience for future theory building and empirical research. Our defintion and proposed framework of the leadership knowing-doing gap contribute to both management learning and leadership development.

Theoretical Contributions

Within the domain of management learning, first, we specifically advance the literature on learning transfer (Blume et al., 2010; Cheng & Hampson, 2008; Goldstein & Ford, 2002; Hutchins et al., 2010) by investigating the transfer problem within leadership. In doing so, we respond to the call in the management learning literature (Blume et al., 2010) to explore the learning transfer of interpersonal skills (such as leadership) into actual practice. We reveal that managers themselves may be unaware of a discrepancy between their leadership learning and actual leadership doing, as leadership is a non-technical skill that can often be difficult to observe (Blume et al., 2010; Bryman, 2004). We add to the literature by highlighting the role of cognitive reflection (Brown et al., 2011; Combe & Carrington, 2015) and feedback (Enos et al., 2003; Day & Dragoni, 2015) in enabling managers to raise their awareness of potential leadership knowing-doing gaps and determining how to respond to address the gaps.

Second, our empirically derived framework is the first to put forward an understanding of how and why the leadership transfer problem occurs. We suggest that it is worthwhile paying more attention to the conditions of transfer, namely generalization and maintenance that are often neglected in research (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Blume et al., 2010), to understand how managers can transfer newly acquired knowledge into leadership behavior in different situations at work

and continuously over time. Our findings challenge the view that individuals are inherently active or proactive and innately development or growth oriented (Deci & Ryan, 2002). Whereas in some situations managers immediately enact leadership behavior to close the gap, in other situations they may choose not to act and instead may prefer avoidance (Anderson, 2003) or procrastination (Steel, 2007) in the face of a leadership knowing-doing gap. Nevertheless, we also show that managers may vary in their readiness (Hannah & Avolio, 2010) and leadership self-efficacy (Hannah et al., 2008) to transfer knowing into doing. We thus offer insights enhancing the understanding of managers' (under)utilization of their learning in practice (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Hoover et al., 2010) and its potential underlying factors.

Third, we advance the literature on learning transfer with a temporal consideration, by demonstrating that there could be a time lag between becoming aware of the knowing-doing gap and actually addressing it. Our study shows it may take time for managers to translate their knowledge about a knowing-doing gap into a behavioral response. The time lag between awareness of the gap and responses to address the gap adds to the known time lag between consolidating new learning into behavioral transfer (Hirst et al., 2004). We also shed light on managers' transfer intentions and decisions, highlighting potential motivational influences in relation to planned behavior (Cheng & Hampson, 2008), the motivation to transfer (Massenberg et al., 2015), and the motivation to lead (Chan & Drasgow, 2001) all of which can take time to translate from intentions to behavior.

Within the domain of leadership development, this research is the first scholarly study of the knowing-doing gap (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000) specifically in leadership (Conger, 2013; Warhurst, 2012). We shift the focus from how to learn leadership to the underexplored transfer of leadership learning into action, as the enactment of leadership is crucial for effective

leadership development (Day, 2000; Johnstal, 2013). We thus introduce the leadership knowing-doing gap and phenomenologically uncover how and why managers experience discrepancies between knowing leadership and enacting leadership. The work that exists to date around the knowing-doing gap in leadership appears to be dominated by publications for practice audiences (e.g., De Vita, 2009; Weber, 2011) and largely based on anecdotal evidence. Little is conceptually and empirically known about the processes by which managers transfer their learned leadership into actual leadership behavior (Hirst et al., 2004) and the distinct elements involved in transfer discrepancies. Our framework provides new insights into the dynamics of the gap, the different cognitive, affective and behavioral facets involved in the experience, as well as potential underlying factors affecting the leadership learning transfer failure (Warhurst, 2012) or application gap (Conger, 2013).

Second, we respond to the suggestion to identify the conditions that may enable managers to effectively apply their learned leadership knowledge and skills (Fiedler, 1996) and the calls for studying the kinds of work environments and organizational conditions that can impact the transfer of leadership learning into practice (Avolio et al., 2010; Barnett & Ceci, 2002; Blume et al., 2010). Our findings point to contextual conditions that disrupt the transfer of knowledge into action, such as hierarchy and the lack of empowerment, and others that can promote transfer, such as effective role models and support for leadership enactment. Thus, we emphasise the significance of the context in shaping leadership (Osborn et al., 2002; Porter & McLaughlin, 2006) and our study highlights the role that the context plays in hindering or supporting managers' transfer of their leadership knowing into doing.

Practical Implications

We recognize that generalizability and transferability of conclusions from a qualitative study is limited (Bryman & Bell, 2007; Gill, 2014). Given that this is the first substantial study

on this topic, findings also need to be considered with care. We still offer initial implications for organizations, since the gap between what managers accumulate as leadership knowing and what they enact at work is a pressing and largely overlooked challenge in practice (CIPD, 2015; Saks, 2013; Weber, 2011).

Managers and organizations can raise awareness of the leadership knowing-doing gap and emphasize the importance of paying attention to noticing managers' transfer of their leadership knowing into leadership action. Opportunities for feedback and reflection can be useful for identifying discrepancies between leadership knowing and doing. Considering its dynamics nature, the leadership knowing-doing gap highlights that accumulating leadership knowledge through various sources also does not necessarily prescribe leadership enactment (Blanchard et al., 2007; Johnstal, 2013; Warhurst, 2012). Therefore, supporting managers in recognizing when a discrepancy exists, but also when they successfully bridged a gap between their leadership knowing and doing could add value to individuals and organizations.

Our interviews offered participants an opportunity to think about their leadership knowing-doing gaps by reflecting on incidents in their work contexts. This illustrated the significance of self-narrative as a process for leadership development and enactment, as participants gained self-knowledge through self-stories from past experiences (Day et al., 2014), often becoming aware of gaps they had not previously noticed. We therefore recommend providing opportunities for individual and collective reflection focused on assessing the transfer of leadership knowing into leadership doing in the workplace. Reflection opportunities could be used by educators to evaluate learning transfer at different points in time, as well as back in organizations, and could be incorporated into existing practices such as personal development plans or 360-degree feedback activities.

Finally, we present individual factors and contextual conditions that can aid organizations in supporting managers in the transfer of leadership knowing into doing. We suggest that aligning individual and organizational goals, as well as creating a supportive climate that boosts managers' motivation and confidence to lead can bridge potential gaps in leadership enactment. Thus, our conceptualization of the leadership knowing-doing gap could make it more detectable by managers and educators, and resolvable in organizations to support further enactment of leadership potential and advance the value of leadership to individuals and organizations.

Limitations and Future Research Opportunities

The first limitation revolves around the scope of this research. We focus on understanding the gap between leadership knowing and leadership doing, its dynamics and underlying factors. We present factors influencing the gap at the individual level that is situated within the contextual level. The study opens up avenues for future research to further examine the context in which leadership is embedded (Osborn et al., 2002; Porter & McLaughlin, 2006) and how it may drive or hinder the transfer of newly acquired leadership knowing into doing. Our work could be extended by focussing specifically on one of the factors that we put forward to investigate it further. For example, future studies could examine environments with a trade-off between urgent work demands and leadership learning transfer (Hirst et al., 2004) to understand how individual and organizational priorities can be aligned to support transfer (Johnstal, 2013).

In terms of methodological limitations, this phenomenological exploration looked at the leadership knowing-doing gap experience from the individual manager's standpoint, which may be subject to a leader-centric (Uhl-Bien, Riggio, Lowe, & Carsten, 2014) and social desirability bias (Wright, Irving, Hibbert, & Greenfield, 2018). We recognize the complexity of leadership involving leaders, followers, dyads, and collectives (Hernandez et al., 2011; Yukl, 2010). Yet, while the critical incidents that we investigated involved relational and collective influences on

the knowing-doing gap at the individual level, such as leader-follower relationships (Valcea, Hamdani, Buckley, & Novicevic, 2011) and the development of leadership capacity in teams (Carson, Tesluk, & Marrone, 2007; Day, Gronn, & Salas, 2004), incorporating a pluralistic standpoint involving perceptions of followers or peers can further enhance our understanding of the leadership knowing-doing gap phenomenon.

Future research could also build on our work and develop an assessment instrument to evaluate the leadership knowing-doing gap. For example, the transfer of learning from a learning episode could be assessed by asking participants to rate their "knowing" against intended learning outcomes of a leadership development program that they attended, and then rate their "doing" according to the extent to which they enact the learning outcomes back in the organization, and at different points in time following the program to assess learning transfer over time. Longitudinal ratings could enrich the understanding of generalization and maintenance conditions of transfer over time (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Blume et al., 2010). Such studies would also respond to recommendations for more longitudinal designs in studying leadership development (Riggio & Mumford, 2011) and examining the effectiveness of leadership development in terms of the desired positive impacts in organizations (Avolio et al., 2010; Collins & Holton, 2004).

Finally, an alternative research avenue is to explore the knowing-doing gap in other open skills, such as entrepreneurship. The entrepreneurship literature looks at the intention-to-behavior transition gap (Nabi, Linan, Fayolle, Krueger, & Walmsley, 2017), with calls to further investigate this transition process whereby learners may have the intention to translate their knowledge of entrepreneurship into entrepreneurial behavior to start new ventures, yet do not

necessarily follow their intentions with actions to make that transition (Nabi et al., 2017; Wood & Pearson, 2009).

CONCLUSION

This research phenomenologically explores the leadership knowing-doing gap from the perspective of 22 managers in leadership roles. We analyze 65 situations in which the leadership knowing-doing gap manifested in the experiences of participants, providing insights into the leadership knowing-doing gap phenomenon. The leadership knowing-doing gap is conceptualized in terms of cognitive, affective, and behavioral elements, which may be influenced by individual and contextual factors, and that interplay along the dynamics of the leadership knowing-doing gap, creating or widening the gap on the one hand, and preventing or closing it on the other hand. Thus, the proposed framework presents the leadership knowing-doing gap as a multifaceted, dynamic and complex experience. It enhances our understanding of the leadership knowing-doing gap for future research relevant to management learning and leadership development. However, Pfeffer and Sutton (2000) suggest that it is crucial not only to "know" about the knowing-doing gap, but to also "do" something about it. Bridging the knowing-doing gap requires actions (Blanchard et al., 2007) and it is hoped that this research aids managers and educators in supporting effective learning transfer and leadership enactment in organizations.

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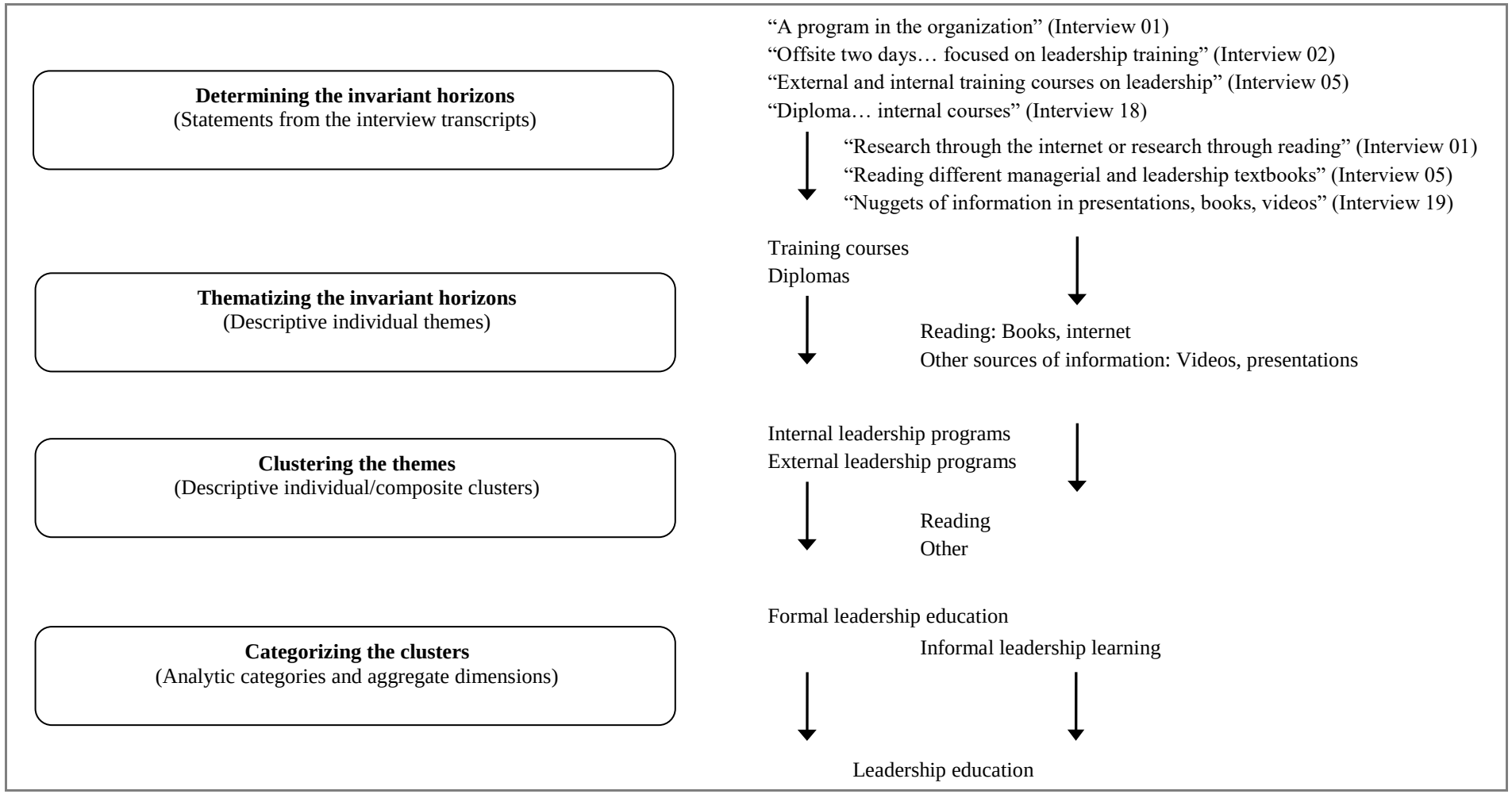
Table 1: Data Analysis Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 - Example of Data Structure from a Sample of Data (For One Interview Question)



Based on a sample of participants' responses to the same interview question ("Thinking of your role as a leader, how did you learn leadership?")

Table 2: Data Analysis Stages 1, 2, 3 and 4 - Example of Data Structure (Across Several Interview Questions)

First Cycle		Second Cycle		
Sample Statements (Invariant Horizons)	**Themes**	**Clusters**	**Categories**	**Aggregate Dimensions**
"I would consciously decide not to do it [leadership]" "You know what you should be doing… you make a different choice and don't follow what you know"	Conscious decision	Aware of the gap	Awareness of the gap	Cognition
"Subconscious decision to do something or not to do something" "Subconscious period of denial"	Subconscious decision	Unaware of the gap in the moment		
"When I'm reflecting on my way home" "I do my reflection days"	Reflection	Becoming aware of the gap		
"Feedback that has woken me up" "360 [feedback] was blunt"	Feedback			
"A bit of frustration… Annoyed with myself" "Very frustrated"	Frustration	Negative affect	Affective states in experiences of the gap	Affect
"I sometimes feel this small guilt" "I felt guilty… I still feel guilty"	Guilt			
"Nervous" "I felt very very nervous"	Nervousness			
"Uncomfortable"	Discomfort			
"I felt really great" "I felt a lot happier" "Gives you self-satisfaction"	Happiness, satisfaction	Positive affect		
"It was a sense of relief for me" "I feel really comfortable"	Relief, comfort			
"I felt quite strong… I felt quite proud"	Pride			
"I will reflect afterwards… deliberating, thinking about it"	Reflection	Determining a future response	Responses to address the gap	Behavior
"Think of a solution" "I have to really think through the route… that might take a month"	Problem solving			
"I will vocally tell them [team members] what I'm not good at" "I'll tell some of my peers… I'll tell my boss"	Telling others	Enacting a present response		

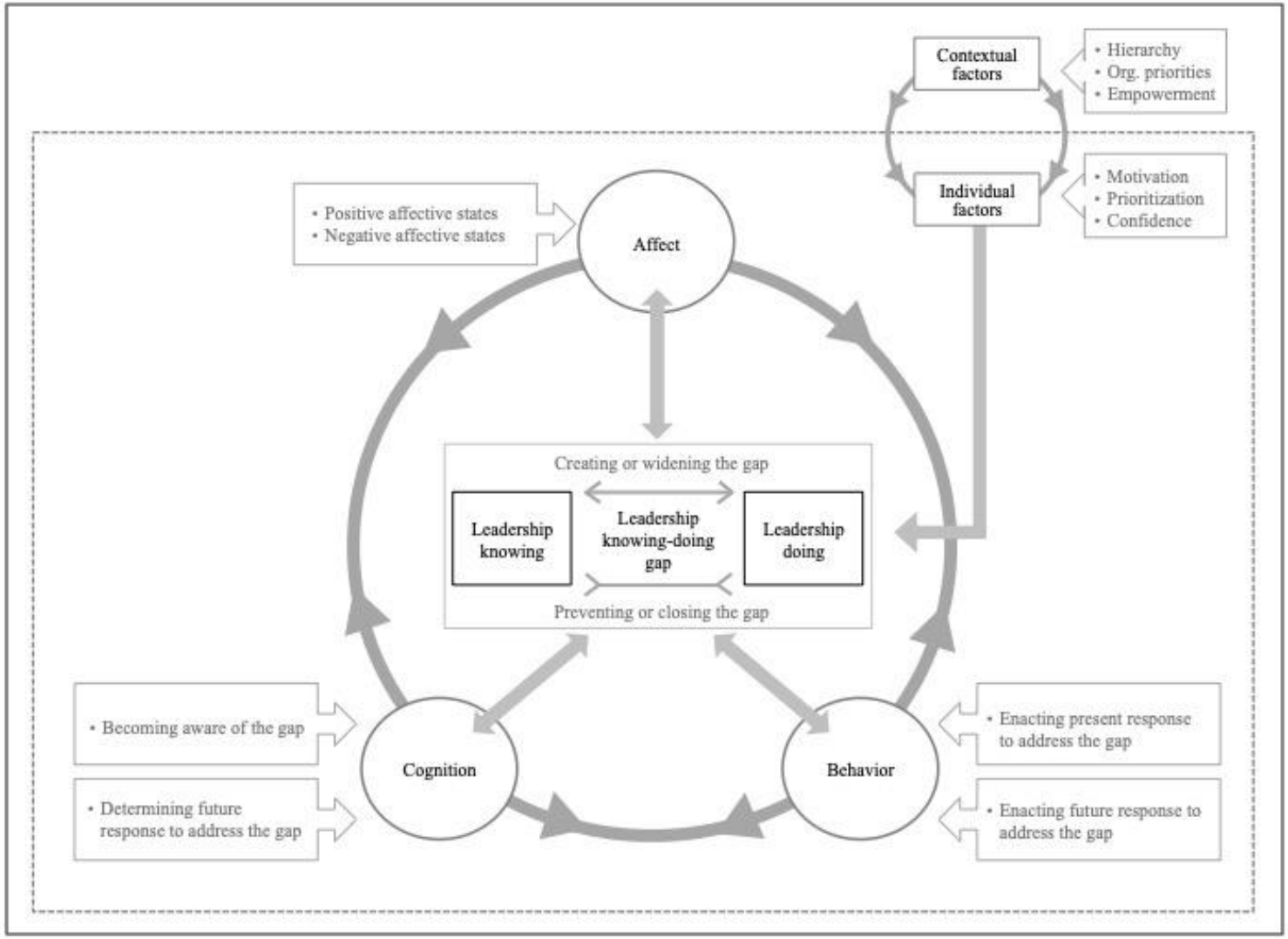
Based on a sample of participants' responses across several interview questions ("How does it [the gap] manifest?", "How did you notice it?", "How did you feel about the incident at the time?" and "When you notice it, how do you respond to it?")

Table 2: Continued

First Cycle		Second Cycle		
Sample Statements (Invariant Horizons)	**Themes**	**Clusters**	**Categories**	**Aggregate Dimensions**
"I don't want to" "I can't be bothered"	Lack of willingness	Lack of motivation to enact leadership	Motivation	Factors influencing the leadership knowing-doing gap
"There isn't energy" "Lack of energy"	Lack of energy			
"Tight framework… Never question anything" "Culture of the organization, the hierarchical nature"	Hierarchy (context)			
"Wanting to change" "Motivation to change"	Motivation to change	Motivation to enact leadership		
"Drive to do it" "I believe in it"	Drive			
"I have not got enough time to do it [leadership]" "Time restraints"	Time constraints	Not prioritizing leadership enactment	Prioritization	
"Day-to-day volume and workload" "Big workload"	Workload			
"Different amounts of pressure… external influences" "Different priorities and organizational measurements"	Org. priorities (context)			
"Re-programming [focus on leadership]" "Re-prioritize [leadership]"	Focusing on leadership	Prioritizing leadership enactment		
"I'd put time in my diary [for leadership]…Time management" "Re-orientate my workload to accommodate that [leadership]"	Time management			
"I'm no good at that" "I don't have what it takes"	Lack of confidence in ability	Lack of confidence to enact leadership	Confidence	
"Hold back and want reassurance" "I need reassurance"	Need for reassurance			
"Senior managers not empowering their people" "Your leader has to have that empowerment approach"	Lack of empowerment (context)			
"Confidence in yourself" "Confidence that you're doing the right thing"	Confidence in ability	Confidence to enact leadership		
"I'm very confident in coming forward and taking action" "Confidence to take responsibility"	Confidence to take action			

Based on a sample of participants' responses across several interview questions (e.g. "What stood in the way of your leadership doing?", "What helped you enact leadership?" and "What helped you successfully close the gap?")

Figure 1: The Leadership Knowing-Doing Gap



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