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Case Study

Criminal Justice Alcohol and Drug Screening in Practice: Using the Substance Abuse Subtle Screening Inventory to Identify Substance Use Disorder in Offenders

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ABSTRACT

Objective

The substance abuse subtle screening inventory (SASSI) has been used successfully in correctional treatment settings and correctional screening since 1988. These screenings include outpatient evaluations of offenders within community settings, as well as assessments of incarcerated individuals within federal, state, city, and county correctional facilities. One key element towards reducing recidivism and reoffending, is that individuals receive treatment for substance use disorders (SUD's) while in the correctional system. While SUD is not the only contributing factor to criminality, it does significantly increase the likelihood of legal infraction and violations, placing these individuals at a higher risk of re-offending. Thus, identifying SUD as early as possible helps provide tailored treatment to those who need it, while simultaneously reducing the risk of future legal difficulties. Now in its fourth iteration (SASSI-4), this article discusses the SASSI screening tools' utility with criminal offenders and serving clinical needs, and reviews a case study of a young male's clinical evaluation while incarcerated.

Results

For this case study, we reviewed the SASSI-4 screening results of a 24-year-old male whom we will call "Bryon". Bryon was in his 4th week of detention at a local mid-western jail in the United States. He was arrested after turning himself in for a prior domestic violence offense committed while under the influence of alcohol and for which he had fled the state. Bryon had one prior arrest (for receiving stolen property, which he subsequently traded for drugs). The intake counselor conducting Bryon's assessment had been meeting with him at the jail for several weeks. The court was particularly interested in determining the level of risk that Bryon would again flee the area.

Conclusion

This case presents us with a good example of the value of early identification of substance use disorder, and potential problems in criminal justice settings. Bryon's SASSI results clearly demonstrate a well-established pattern of substance misuse that will require relatively intensive intervention. Therefore, he may be a solid candidate for diversion into an alcohol and drug treatment program as a way of reducing the risk of future offenses.

Keywords

Subtle SUD screening; The SASSI Institute; Criminal offenders; Corrections; Recidivism; Alcohol and drug screening.

INTRODUCTION

Recidivism among criminal offenders has always been a serious problem and remains so today. There are numerous factors that contribute towards this phenomenon, one of the most salient being substance use disorder (SUD).^{1,2} For intervention to be effective in reducing recidivism however, early identification

and assignment to appropriate treatment is needed, particularly within institutional environments.³⁻⁶ A good example here, was a study conducted within the Stay 'N Out therapeutic community at the Corcoran correctional facility in California dating back more than forty years.⁷ Although in its nascent stages at that time, this research on therapeutic communities within prison settings defined important advances in prison substance abuse treatment

and reentry programs. Wexler’s work and studies that followed, offered guiding observations and evidence-based practice describing prison substance abuse treatment that would ultimately facilitate the implementation of treatment for offenders with co-occurring mental illness and substance use disorders (COD). There have been multitudes of studies emanating from this seminal work and the literature in this regard is quite expansive.⁸⁻¹⁰

One of the key findings that emerged from these various studies is the clear need to appropriately document these individuals’ complex treatment needs, and examine if these necessities were indeed being met. Doing so often required various modifications to existing treatment paradigms, such that treatment became more tailored in order to facilitate its implementation, as well as document and measure individual and collective progress.^{4,5,10} As a result, clinicians required screening tools that helped reveal specific, often nuanced individual needs. Doing so facilitated inmate-referral to suitable programs, further ensuring a more appropriate, and individualized treatment regimen.

ACCURACY OF SELF-REPORT

There is debate among researchers regarding the extent to which people are accurate and forthright in reporting their alcohol and drug use and its consequences. Most substance abuse screening inventories rely on people to acknowledge behaviors directly related to their substance use and are therefore composed of direct questions about substance use/misuse and its consequences, i.e., face valid questions. The substance abuse subtle screening inventory (SASSI) on the other hand, includes both subtle and face valid items because research findings indicated that using both types of scales significantly increased the accuracy of the instrument.^{2,11,12}

Validation research on the SASSI-4 reported that criminal offenders acknowledged significantly less alcohol and illicit drug use and consequences on face valid scale (self-report) than those in substance use treatment programs, social service programs, and community settings.¹³ However, offenders showed no difference in their response to subtle questions when compared to those with substance use disorders in other settings. Within criminal justice settings, the SASSI-4 demonstrated overall screening accuracy of 95%, despite attempts at minimization of substance use. Research findings also illustrate the strengths of using the SASSI-4 screening tool for criminal offenders when compared to entirely face-valid screens.¹⁴ That is, the inclusion of subtle items on the SASSI-4 as well as a scale to identify clients’ level of defensive

responding strengthens the ability of the SASSI-4 to accurately identify clients with substance use disorders compared to entirely face valid screens such (i.e., alcohol use disorders identification test (AUDIT), drug abuse screening tool (DAST), cut annoyed guilt eye-opener (CAGE)).

Offenders within correctional institutions will often present with co-occurring mental health problems.^{3,7,15} These issues, in tandem with legal offense history and substance use disorders, can ultimately affect their response patterns on the various assessments they are given. Our extant research on the SASSI-4 has shown its screening sensitivity is 98% in dual diagnosis clients; and specificity is 93% in persons diagnosed with non substance-related psychological disorders only (Table 1), producing an overall accuracy rate of 97% in people suffering from other psychological disorders.¹⁴

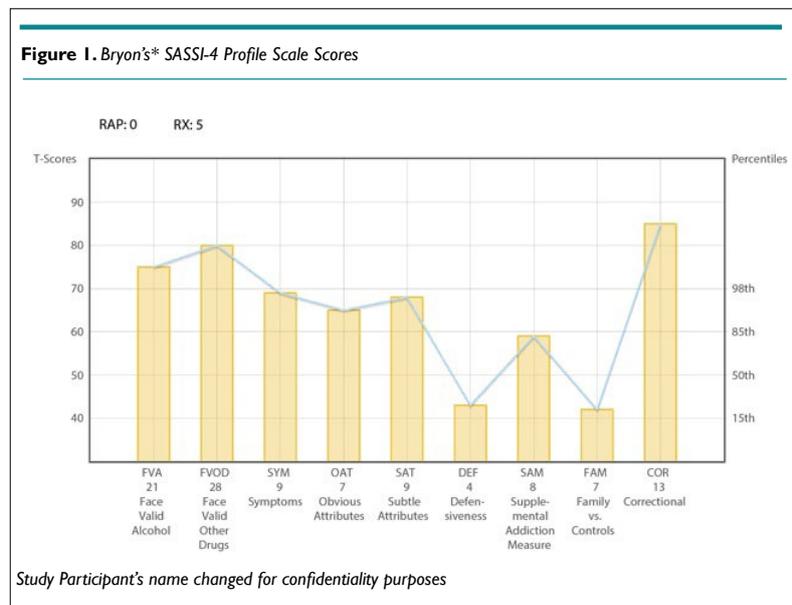
Another advantage of using the SASSI with correctional populations is that in addition to providing an overall decision rule about whether an individual has a high or low probability of having an SUD, it also includes a scale that identifies an individual’s risk of incurring ongoing legal difficulties. The correctional (COR) scale, identifies individuals who are at a relative risk for legal problems or ongoing legal problems. By discussing an individual’s elevated COR score with them, clinicians have an opportunity to help address their clients’ negative behaviors, especially those potentially leading to ongoing legal difficulties. Individuals may benefit from exploration into behaviors and characteristics that put them at further risk. The SASSI-4 also offers an Rx scale, which is designed to assist in identifying likely prescription drug abuse. Additionally, since cultural factors in patterns of substance use and abuse is of significance, it is important to note that research on the SASSI-4 demonstrated no significant variations as a function of ethnic group membership throughout North America.¹⁴ The ethnic groups included 45 (3.7%) American Indian or Alaska Native, 12 (1%) Asian, Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander, 133 (10.9%) Black/African American, 86 (7.1%) Hispanic American, 916 (75.4%) White/Caucasian, 11 (0.9%) Multiracial, and 12 (1%) Other.

In addition to addressing denial, the SASSI tool enables clinicians to establish rapport with their client base, particularly when reviewing the results of each scale. The face valid scales on the SASSI-4 consist of the following: The face valid alcohol (FVA) and face valid other drug (FVOD) scales measure how often respondents have engaged in and experienced effects from the use of alcohol and other drugs within a specified time frame (e.g.,

Table 1. Overview of Correspondence between SASSI-4 Screening Outcomes and DSM-5 SUD Diagnoses among Clients with Co-occurring or non-SUD Related Diagnoses

	SASSI-4 Screening Outcome		
	Test Positive	Test Negative	Total
Diagnosis			
Criterion Positive for SUD and co-occurring disorder	56-years	Female	34-years
Criterion Negative for SUD: non-SUD related disorder only	51-years	Female	19-years
Total	317	63	380

Note. 369/380 cases correctly classified=97.1% Overall Accuracy. Sensitivity=97.8%; Specificity=93.3%; Positive predictive value=98.7%; Negative predictive value=88.9%.



lifetime, past 12-months) (i.e., Gotten into trouble on the job, in school, or with law because of your drinking?; Misused medications or took drugs to forget school, work or family pressures?). The symptoms (SYM) scale measures the extent to which the client acknowledges the problems and consequences of their substance use history and contains face valid items (i.e., True or False: I have sometimes drunk too much.). The subtle scales consist of the following: The obvious attributes (OAT) scale is compiled empirically of items shown to discriminate between SUD criterion groups under standard instructions to answer honestly (i.e., True or False: I have not lived the way I should.).The subtle attributes (SAT) scale measures characteristics of individuals who have a substance use disorder that are less obvious than those measured by the OAT scale and consists of items found to discriminate between those with and without SUDs even when they attempted to hide signs of substance misuse (i.e., True or False: It is better not to talk about personal problems.). The defensiveness (DEF) scale identifies individuals who are unwilling to acknowledge minor, socially acceptable limitations or attempt to deny shortcomings and common flaws (i.e., True or False: Most people would lie to get what they want.). The supplemental additions measure (SAM) scale consists of items that discriminate between SUD criterion groups and is used in the SASSI-4 decision rules (i.e., True or False: Sometimes I wish I could control myself better). These seven scales are utilized in a series of decision rules to produce a dichotomous screening classification. The SASSI-4 also contains two supplementary clinical scales. The aforementioned COR scale affords clinicians an opportunity to help divert their clients' negative behaviors (i.e., True or False: I break more laws than many people.). The Family vs. Controls (FAM) scale identifies individuals with characteristics common among family members of people with SUD (i.e., True or False: I have been tempted to leave home.). These two scales are not used to screen for SUD, but provide information that can be useful in evaluation and treatment planning. Additionally, the random answering pattern (RAP) scale is used to identify profile invalidity that might be due to deliberate noncompliance, insufficient reading comprehension, inattention, or other processes (i.e.,

True or False: Nearly everyone enjoys being picked on and made fun of.).

Below we present an example of a randomly selected case report called into our clinical consultation phone line by a professional using the SASSI-4 in a criminal justice counseling setting and used here with permission and client anonymity. Please note that the following case study is emblematic of the thousands of reports generated by SASSI scoring results. The SASSI-4 is a screening tool validated to identify high or low probability of an individual having an SUD. Scales scores on the SASSI can provide clinically useful information when above the 85th percentile or below the 15th percentile (this is the same as T-Scores above 60 and below 40) on the profile sheet (Figure 1). Recognizing these profile patterns may be of value in directing the ongoing course of assessment and treatment planning. Inferences drawn from SASSI scale score interpretation are hypotheses to explore based on years of feedback from professionals using the instrument.

BRYON'S CASE STUDY |

For this case study, we reviewed the SASSI-4 screening results of a 24-year-old male whom we will call "Bryon". Bryon was in his 4th week of detention at a local mid-western jail. He was arrested after turning himself in for a prior domestic violence offense committed while under the influence of alcohol and for which he had fled the state. Bryon had one prior arrest (for receiving stolen property, which he subsequently traded for drugs). The intake counselor conducting Bryon's assessment had been meeting with him at the jail for several weeks. The court was particularly interested in determining the level of risk that Bryon would again flee the area.

When examining a SASSI profile scale score (Figure 1), it is important to begin by looking at the information gathered from the RAP score (random responding) decision rule result, and level of defensiveness (DEF). Notice that Bryon seemed to respond to the SASSI items in a meaningful manner (RAP=0) and that there is

no test evidence of defensive responding (DEF=4). The results of the decision rules indicate that he meets the criteria for classifying him as having a high probability of a substance use disorder as well as a high probability of prescription drug abuse (Rx=5).

Bryon acknowledges extensive and severe alcohol and drug problems (FVA=21 and FVOD=28). Although he told his intake counselor that he has been abstinent for a period of several weeks prior to incarceration, his previously reported substance use history during his prior arrest included substantial substance-related problems including loss of control, negative consequences, and social functioning. Bryon also expressed regrets that his previous substance use has resulted in similar outcomes, and similar outcomes among many of his friends, that is, fights, arguments and arrests. It is important to note that Bryon's behaviors belie these regrets, as he is either in denial about his substance use disorder or has found himself within the destructive patterns of behaviors leading to a revolving door of drug use, arrests and inevitably, incarceration. Additionally, in Bryon's case these behaviors occur on an almost repetitive yearly basis. These behavior patterns also appear to be the rule among members of this population, rather than the exception.

There is significant evidence that Bryon's life experiences include living in social environments where the abuse of alcohol and other drugs, and associated consequences is a relatively common and routine occurrence (SYM=9). Despite Bryon's awareness of behavioral problems related to his drinking and drug use, the normalization of such problems in the milieu in which he lives may make it difficult for him to fully accept the severity of his addiction.

Examining the items Bryon endorsed on the FVA, FVOD, SYM and Rx scales may provide useful insight into his motivations for using, and help him see the consequences that have resulted from his use. In addition, Bryon's responses are remarkably similar to individuals with an SUD who often lack awareness and insight regarding the impact of alcohol and drug use on their psychological and emotional functioning (SAT=9). He may very well be unaware of related symptoms such as emotional avoidance, fear of intimacy, and maintaining personal power and control. Despite these limitations, Bryon does seem to acknowledge some awareness of possessing behavioral characteristics and traits commonly associated with individuals who have substance use disorders (OAT=7). These may include such things as low frustration tolerance, impulsivity, self-centeredness, and irritability.

Bryon is at high-risk for continuing to incur legal problems given his high score on the Correctional Scale (COR=13). When making case disposition decisions, it is therefore important to take into consideration evidence that substance misuse increases the risk of impulse control problems and poor judgment. These issues need to be addressed in order to keep him out of future trouble with the law.

Treatment Recommendations

This case presents us with a good example of the value of early

identification of substance use disorder, and potential problems in criminal justice settings. Bryon's SASSI results clearly demonstrate a well-established pattern of substance misuse that will require relatively intensive intervention. Therefore, he may be a solid candidate for diversion into an alcohol and drug treatment program as a way of reducing the risk of future offenses.

Treatment planning should include interventions designed to build upon Bryon's willingness to be open about his alcohol and drug problems. Efforts to increase his self-awareness and insight regarding the pervasive nature of substance use in his life would be valuable. Therapies including Motivational Interviewing and Cognitive Behavioral therapy are effective tools to increase his self-awareness and insight regarding the pervasive nature of substance use.^{16,17} These cognitive approaches may be beneficial in helping Bryon to reframe his view of the social environment in which he lives. Specific intervention for prescription drug abuse also needs to be addressed and Bryon should be evaluated as a candidate for a medically assisted treatment (MAT) program. Community self-help groups and therapeutic group modalities may also be particularly helpful in providing an environment that encourages abstinence and establishing new social support networks upon release.

Bryon's recommended level of care should include adequate supervisory support and structure to ensure successful completion of treatment and transition into after care. Anger management and impulse control issues should be addressed to further reduce the risk of continued domestic violence. Random toxicological screens, cognitively based behavior management strategies, and possible use of transitional living arrangements may also be of benefit.

DISCUSSION

According to the Center for Disease Control/US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) (2014), abuse of prescription medications has become an epidemic. Among the most frequently abused prescription medications are opioid pain medications and sedatives prescribed for anxiety and sleep disorders.¹⁸ Inclusion of the prescription drug abuse scale (Rx) on the SASSI-4 to specifically identify individuals likely to be abusing prescription drugs was aimed at extending the clinical utility of the instrument by providing practitioners a measure of prescription medication abuse, in addition to the overall screening outcome for likely substance use disorder.^{2,14} In the case study sample provided here, we did not examine specific substances that Bryon may have used. However, when used as part of an overall assessment package, the SASSI-4's Rx scale can help identify individuals who may be attempting to self-medicate a physical pain problem or non-substance related psychological disorder. (See for example Table 1, which describes correspondence between SASSI-4 screening outcomes and DSM-5 SUD diagnoses among clients with co-occurring or non-SUD related diagnoses).

A more comprehensive evaluation should be considered when an individual acknowledges prescription medication abuse. As the SASSI-4 was concurred with DSM-5 diagnostic criteria

when constructed, it is particularly sensitive to detecting the presence of a clinically diagnosed substance use disorder. The sensitivity of SASSI-4 screening outcomes (i.e., the percentage of respondents diagnosed as having a substance use disorder who screened test positive on the SASSI-4) was 94% in the development sample and 93% in the validation sample, for an overall sensitivity of 93%.¹³

Substance abuse treatment for incarcerated offenders can reduce relapse and further criminal activities.¹⁹ The SASSI has been shown to demonstrate the characteristics that make it an ideal tool for this population—it is valid, reliable, inexpensive and easy to administer.²⁰ It can also be scored with a narrative report electronically; allowing for no delay in obtaining results as staff time is not needed to score and interpret.

In addition to its use in criminal justice settings, the SASSI-4 can be used by anyone who needs to screen for alcohol and drug related disorders in a variety of settings (e.g., school counseling, military/veterans, behavioral health). The instrument is licensed for use by substance abuse counselors, educators, medical practitioners, criminal justice professionals, drug court personnel, employee assistance counselors, and therapists throughout North America, the United Kingdom, Greece, and Australia.¹ The SASSI has been translated for research purposes into American Sign Language (ASL), Brazilian Portuguese, Bulgarian, Finnish, French, Greek, Japanese, Romanian, Russian, Slovene, and Spanish. Currently, the ASL, Spanish and Greek versions have been validated and are available for licensing.²¹⁻²³

LIMITATIONS

It is important to realize that the SASSI is designed to identify people who are likely to have a substance use disorder regardless of whether or not the disorder is active or in remission. Therefore, recovering individuals may continue to show a “high probability of having a substance use disorder” even if they are in recovery.

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We wish to extend our gratitude to the many clinicians that reach out to us with questions and who share their experience with us regarding their use of the SASSI screening tool.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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Book Review

The Boss is Dead

Leadership between Perfection and Explosion – A Psychological Study

by Olaf Lange, DiplPsych First Published (own print), 2017

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PREFACE

The authors consider themselves organizational and leadership developers. They have been active in the corporate world for a long time, working and consulting. Their work is based on morphological psychology, a psychological approach developed by Wilhelm Salber, that aims at understanding behavior as it is in constant state of change. It is not about measuring and explaining, but about describing and understanding how things interact and change. With its comprehensive approach in describing everyday life, morphological psychology is an excellent tool for examining and understanding corporate culture. In this book, the authors examine what constitutes leadership in the corporate work environment psychologically, how “change” is managed, and what happens between “perfection” and “explosion” in leadership.

THE BOSS IS DEAD

Every year, about 16 billion dollars are spent on “leadership” in 74 countries.¹ Simultaneously, it is common to see the collapse of carefully planned projects, silo thinking, hyperactive strategy management, and “burn-out” of the people involved. Extensive and, meaningless activity ends in exhaustion, and potential profits remain unexploited, while industrial establishments and financial managers expect salvation from real “leadership.” The authors examine questions such as what difference can leadership really make in times of automated processes? How does leadership work today? How do managers lead in practice? What problems do they encounter? What strategies can and cannot support organizations?

The following explorations are based on 20 in-depth interviews with leading managers from different levels (managing boards, BU managers, executives, team leaders, division managers), as well as on approximately 250 intensive examinations of organizational projects that team Steffenhagen consulting GmbH has conducted over the years.

CAUGHT IN SIMPLE IMAGES

The conceptual abstraction of “leadership” is usually connected to unspoken images of people and things interacting within a company and the work environment. These images work like

secret whisperers for managers and employees, just like a “small man in your ear”.

First image: The person being led is being used “rationally” like an object to guarantee “profit” and “yield” as noted in “*Handbuch Führung – Der Werkzeugkasten für Vorgesetzte*” [transl: “*Handbook Leadership – The Toolbox for Bosses*”]. It is based on linear mechanics. Human beings turn into “instruments” for producing yield. This image becomes evident quite graphically in the shareholder value approach.

Second image: The “other” is seen as a “creature led by self-interest” that is categorically not to be trusted in a “social arena”. “Leadership” in this image means assertion by the strongest on the social battlefield. This image is reflected well in the principal agent model.

These images imply a desperate search for leaders that come as close as possible to the respective “ideals” characterized in terms of mechanics or dominance. The search is for leader “heroes” who personify the abstract ideals by their outstanding characteristics, who know which of the employees’ buttons to push in order to optimize yield, or how best to manipulate their self-interests. Some examples of leadership training programs that look for this “ideal” leader include “*Leadership Qualities: 16 traits of the world’s most successful people*” or “*Die 7 Wege zur Effektivität*” [transl: “*The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*”] or “*Die 7 Seiten des*

*perfekten Managers*⁵ [transl: “*The 7 Sides of the Perfect Manager*”]. Such programs feed a huge assessment center industry and simultaneously support the belief in “*the powers that be*” that have to select the leaders. Such efforts project the association between mechanistic ignorance and belief in miracles.

Systemic psychology has come up with a nice buzzword for this: They call it a necessary new approach, the “*post-heroic management*”. Unfortunately, this notion can only describe the new, just like the post-modern, in a negative way: non-heroic, non-modern that is neither familiar nor old-fashioned.

LEADERSHIP AS CO-OPERATION |

Since neither ideological nor nihilistic concepts lead anywhere, a thorough examination of the “*individual and the genuine*” (Nietzsche) is in order.⁶ What really happens in “leading” today? The analysis of in-depth interviews with leading managers shows that leading is not a solitary act of commanding but acting within the framework of a whole that humans create. A leading manager only exists if there are employees, and both only exist if there is a comprehensive entity, such as a business. Leading and being led both happen in shared common enterprises where people and things create a productive work environment (“*business is people*”).

In the framework of common enterprises, the business of “leading” initially seems to be being able to “dictate” other people.

BLINDING “BEING-ABLE-TO-DICTATE” |

The search for ideas in situations of leading quickly prompts the notion of “instrumental-rational” approach. Leaders are expected to exert themselves to emphasize and advertise the dictating character of their doing; as if calling the shots and control were the only things that matter. In this notion the images of the “*captain on the boat-bridge*” or “*pilot in the cockpit*”, which imply speed, height, direction and so on, are evoked. .

“The leading manager is the pilot.”

“The captain sets direction, speed and destination.”

“Leading means providing the direction.”

“Leading means showing how things work.”

The task of implementing one’s own corporate mandate then means to make one’s own will the will of the others. This requires manipulative tricks:

“Making someone think that my idea was theirs, selling things, that is what leading is all about.”

“I must succeed in making my own will the will of the others.”

“Leading often means making people do things against their own notions.”

SHUTTING “BEING LED” OUT |

The appealing hope of being able to make forces and resistance by “the others” disappear with tricks or pressure is accompanied by a not-so-obvious feature of leadership today: The leader forgets that she or he is also always being led. Being led appears as an embarrassing weakness, indicating a breakdown of one’s power and sense of perfection where one’s own actions and decisions are being dictated by others, others who are “above”, “next to” and “under” the leading manager. “Leaders” are often less aware of their imprinting through biographical or societal mandates, conditions and expectations. By forgetting their own “humanness” and finiteness, they tend to overburden themselves as autonomous super humans which often leads to emotional exhaustions, burnout, and even to mental illness.

Those who are in supervisory and leadership positions are often initially confronted, influenced and indirectly “led” by demanding and cumbersome employees. To their regret, they soon realize that they cannot entirely control their supervisees as well as what they themselves can and should do. A good example that illustrates the dynamic tension between leading and being led is the young inexperienced young leader who, in an effort to assert himself or herself, gives numerous orders right on the first day without taking into account that every order will come back to its sender with numerous requirements, like a boomerang.

Leaders are also unavoidably being dictated “from above”:

“When my boss sets the direction and starts going there, I am happy to go along, then it is clear where to go and what to do.”

“Then come the orders from the management board, who have the authority, and then everybody responds.”

Even though “all good things come from above”, in the long run the dictating will be experienced as aggravating and embarrassing. As a consequence the “captain” tries to get his or her lost or diminished authority back by trying to squirm free from higher orders just as cunningly as his or her own employees and supervisees. Such attempts, however, cannot be avoided or hidden completely and would come back to haunt them eventually during coaching or “on the couch”.

This ongoing yet typically overlooked dynamic relationship between dictating and being dictated, between leading and being led, creates a whole lot of tension, friction and conflict in everyday work life. To reconcile and manage this dynamic relationship, the author describe four common strategies that are commonly utilized. Since leadership always takes place in a cultural framework, these leadership styles and strategies mirror and reflect the unspoken and often not-so-obvious requirements, demands and ideals of the “global” techno-financial culture.

The “Submission Gesturers”

“Leadership” is often practiced as something that “gets things under control”. Any resistances are to be smoothed out, everything

edged to be made round. With the gesture of willing submission, leaders project the virtual image of a “super human” who can serve everybody and conduct their duties fully. They are supposed to be “perfect”, they want to “*take everybody along*”, “*get everyone on board*”, “*not lose anybody*”, “*not let anybody fall by the wayside*” or “*not hurt anybody*,” and all of this, lo and behold, while trying to make their own will the will of the others!

The gesture of one’s own submission aims to enforce everybody else’s joyful and voluntary submission. This resembles the idea of competing in a football game and expecting the opposing team to score own goals. Friction, confrontation, aggression, risks, or enduring resistances no longer appear in the attempt to set the business in a completely corrected direction through compliance and smooth operation.

“My boss always says: capture the people so that afterwards there is only a YES.”

“I want everyone to like me.”

The submission gesture even goes so far as to deny that human beings are different; everybody must receive the same treatment. The current vernacular expression of “*turning affected parties into participants*” is part of the list of virtues of a leader without invoking guilt or ominous consequences. “Aggression” and assertive leadership strategies are avoided noticeably, by the leader, and often left to the receptionist or the administrative assistant to “*show their teeth*.”

“Networking is fun. If you combine together, something good comes out of it.”

“In the end, we are a big XYZ family.” “I’m not a biter.”

“I have always been in favor of co-operation.”

The boss is dead. Leading without leading; that is what the whole “*leadership suppressing industry*” builds on today which is characterized by “political correctness”, “philosophy of equality”, “*delegates of the General Equal Treatment Act*”, “CSR” or “codes of ethics,” even though nobody asks for the contents of “ethics” any longer. Leaders want to look decent and avoid feeling guilty. They practice “*meeting instead of leading*”. The authors believe that this is the predominant goal of quite a few HR departments. Submission gesturers may come close to the cultural ideal of a clean superman or a superwoman that has lost any semblance of decisiveness. “*If you want everything, you cannot decide for anything.*” Perfectionism becomes the freezing point where leadership of humans gets frozen and paralyzed.

However, under the cover of equalizing and smoothing, incredible pressure builds up. The submission gesturer wants (and has) to “*kiss the others’ ass*” even though secretly every now and then. Such acts of course must not be expressed or openly displayed which amounts to repression or labeled as hypocrisy. Gradually, the flawless “leaders” lose sight of their own identity, they vanish, or lose themselves in the mix. Doubts regarding their own

significance, and role in the wheelwork of the business arise, leading to depression and burnout. Anger, outrage, and disappointment break free explosively, often off the record, which is like a mysterious turnaround from virtuous Dr. Jekyll to darksome Mr. Hyde.

The “Bulldozers”

The realization that perfect leadership beyond reproach is impossible it abruptly turns into “abrasiveness”, “ruthless reigning”, and “*bluntness regardless of the consequences.*” The exploding leader blindly butts into others’ assignments and spheres (“*bypass management*”). Power is demonstrated for the sake of power, followed by employees feeling “flooded”. Quite often that is the moment when McKinsey is brought into the company.⁷

“Then it is enough. Then I pound the table!”

A smart form of flooring is the simple use of bare figures and numbers instead of human interaction to achieve a specified goal. Excessive demands are imposed dictated by figures “from above”. This is usually done quite politely, which only hides the relentless abrasiveness of the excessive demands imposed on the parties involved. Leadership perfectionists can save their virtuous image by blaming the abrasiveness on the (God-given) figures and goals “from above” that others need to achieve. The authors noted that some companies have realized that something about this approach is fundamentally wrong: “*Wie Zahlen Manager in die Irre führen*”⁸ [transl: “*How numbers mislead managers?*”].

Frequently, the ruthless reigning and flooring periodically revert to gestures of submission. Through mediation efforts, to alleviate the disruption of trust, fear of a damaged organizational image and personal remorse the return to a mode of smoothing and equalizing is used.

“As a leader, you won’t get far by yourself?”

Some leading managers seem to never grow up; they tilt and rotate without measure between the extremes of submission gesture and explosion of dominance. Anna Freud described this tilting strategy as “*asceticism of puberty*”. The parties involved frequently talk of a “loony bin” set up by perfectionists who shy away from feeling guilty, avoid taking risks or working through anything stressful.

The “Trench Fighters”

While tilting between submission gesture and explosion of dominance still aims to balance everything, a third style of leading takes the opposite direction; Rip apart, trench, and split. The strategy of “*divide et impera*” is making a name for itself as “silo thinking” today. Human enterprises are split into “good” and “evil”. “*Those up there – us down here*” or “*I am good – the others are bad*” or “*them there – us here*”. Such oppositional dispositions lead to confrontations where people build alternating “rope teams”, “take stands”, have “trench fights”. In such an environment, double standards, hypocrisy, spies and cliques become an indispensable part of the company culture.

Trench fighters are in full cry beyond the hierarchically ordered everyday business in what has been excessively celebrated for 20-years: It is called “Project work.” This mode of working offers everybody who’s tired of perfection the opportunity to fall back into their rude “primitive state” of thinking and acting where clubbing and stabbing become daily occurrences. Flat hierarchies are the tiger cages for the dog-eat-dog fight. Project work turns into the arena of social Darwinism replacing the pubertal figure of a “leader.” It also releases leadership of guilt and risks. If something goes wrong, it is “the team’s” fault. This atmosphere manifests itself in the processes happening around the annual budgeting exercise involving deals, buffers, deceits, and delays. “Everybody knows it, nobody says it.”

In almost all of the interviews, the author found a significant complaints about the lack of “worthwhile goals.” The practical work of an enterprise, for which one works, is lost, leading to feelings of “never really getting anything done”, and feeling “hounded.” Leading managers lose their connection to reality, they float in abstract spaces. of the “Global” reign of numbers, mechanical exploitation of counterparts, and leading without goal and passion with destructive impact. Sabotaging the business, inner quitting, “burn-out” and shortage of time are experiences that reflect on the shareholder value machines. Complete submission, and functioning in a cash machine reinforce the need for equalizing and smoothing efforts.

Farmer’s Handcraft

The three styles of leading described above are all geared to the cultural ideal of the perfect super-human who rules the world with digital technology and without guilt. In times of global “*techno-financial management*”, many managers believe they can make huge profits with minimal effort, resoluteness or personal commitment. It is just like one can find the mate of one’s dreams by swiping a thumb on a smart phone. Such a worldview of business can lead to entirely unwanted and disastrous results. Such realization directs some leading managers to choose an entirely different approach. Instead of using the digital machine culture as a role model, they adopt the image and perspective of a farmer, and the skills of a gardener, patiently plowing the soil, where dictating and being dictated to helps create and sustain a unifying and productive culture of work.

“Leading is like gardening.”

“You have to take care of things, you get annoyed, you still take care of things and reach your goal together.”

“Leading is also about cultivating and shaping.”

“There is a time for everything, and you cannot influence the weather.”

“Grass will not grow faster if you yank it.”

Leading a company like a gardener is about developing productive common work, that could involve quarreling, becoming guilty, allowing remainders, having stamina, persevering and

sticking to goals. Such an approach conveys influences so that they lead to something worthwhile, chafing, driving people, dealing with setbacks, being able to wait, allowing and using things unknown, taking risks, and ultimately developing in ways that allows humans and things to “*make something of it*,” even though it sometimes may lead to failure.

This way of leading contrasts with the ideal of perfection leadership. The “*Süddeutsche*” newspaper praised failure saying, “*Striking out, and failure is relative, subjective and good. It’s about time for the performance-oriented Germans to realize that. It is a pity and dangerous how they are afraid of defeat, from an economic point of view*”⁹ As a pure reversal of the rigor of perfectionistic leadership, the willingness to fail does not provide a standard for leadership but comes with the territory if one is to consider leadership realistically.

OUTLOOK ON REALISM

Leading means acting within the framework of clearly understood work environment. Goals and expected outcomes need to be clearly articulated and explained. However, these may not be well understood by employees, and could involved resistance, silent or expressed. Means and actions to achieve the goals may not be readily accepted or acted upon by those who are being led. Leader’s responsibility is to acknowledge such uncertainties in a realistic context and act accordingly.

The realistic connection to the work environment is crucial for the development of leaders. Leadership trainings usually happens in a “work vacuum” where leadership processes are talked about in abstract form and are not tied to concrete processes in one’s own business. The subsequent “transfer of learning” is left to the trainees as they are immersed into the work place. This is like board a plane after being reassured that the pilot has participated in several flight trainings and will now convey those insights and findings to the upcoming flight on a plane he or she does not fully understand?

Courage is required in leadership. This means willingness to take risks. A company may be a yield warrant, on the one hand, but on the other hand, it may also be a place where lasting work is maintained in a risky world where risks cannot be eliminated. This requires courage on the part of the leading managers, especially the executive manager, if a business strives to develop and change. This requires saying goodbye to calculating and safety thinking, and embracing uncertainty and constant change.

“Knowledge” is the second cornerstone for good leadership. This does not mean “information” (of which we have more than enough), but genuine knowledge and comprehensive understanding of context. Businesses quite often do not really look closely when it comes to the perception of market potentials and the dynamic interactions between the work environment and the outside world. Bare figures “do not tell” always what is real. Only meaningful knowledge in context tells us things that, of course could involve facts and figures.

Finally, something like “humbleness” should be required

in order to understand that a leader, and by extension the company, cannot have all they need and want at the same time in the real world. Humbleness, is not meant to imply asceticism or being well-behaved, but accepting human reality, acknowledging its imperfections, and embracing risks and uncertainties while engaging in the process of achievable goals realistically. Humbleness is also the attitude of the farmers who do not consider themselves the master, but the keeper of life in a changing world.

The authors of this book have addressed significant issues dealing with leadership in the work environment that take into consideration the evolving nature of work and its dynamic relationship to the techno-financial world as well as human nature. The implications for preparation and training of current and future leaders in the work and corporate environment are valuable and long lasting.

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Book Review

Three Cultural Influences on Leadership: The Compulsion, the Shock and the Dataism

Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and the New Techniques of Power

by Byung-Chul Han, S. Fischer V. 5th edition of 2004

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In this brief review I summarize what the philosopher Byung-Chul Han, a student of Sloterdijk, presents in his book “Psychopolitics”. I would like to recommend Byung-Chul Han’s books to everyone! Especially the three volumes “*Fatigue Society*”, “*The Expulsion of the Other*” and “*Psychopolitics*”.

I hope to be helpful to leaders by pointing out particular cultural issues he raises. A tip right up front: “*Folks, You ought to be in more talk!*”. Influences on leadership.

In today’s global environment, we humans are threatened by three things: Compulsion, shock and dataism. I want to highlight Han’s ideas about where “traps for living” can be found, how important our countless as well as innumerable stories are for our leader, and for living together as humans, and the “shock” to which we are perhaps all exposed?

FREEDOM TURNS INTO COMPULSION

Han posits, “*We believe today that we are not a subjugated subject, but a free project, always redesigning, reinventing itself.*”

But this freedom turns into compulsion! He writes, “*The ego as a project, which believes it has freed itself from external constraints and external compulsions, now submits to internal constraints and self-compulsions in the form of compulsions to perform and optimise.*” Moreover, Han adds, “*We live in a special historical phase in which freedom itself gives rise to constraints.*”

This quote from our everyday business life illustrates the point: “*Fall in love with the process of becoming the very best version of yourself.*”

The above formula could be seen as a guide to gradual suicide. Such tips can backfire, even when helpful and leading!

SHOCK SPECIALISTS

Han refers to the book by Naomi Klein on the subject of “neoliberalism” published in 2007 titled, “*The Shock Strategy*”. One protagonist in it is Doctor Sock, actually Doctor Ewen Cameron, a psychiatrist and torturer. Doctor Cameron’s “*shock-torture research*” was funded by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The Doctor dreamed of being able to erase people’s psychic first by electric shocks and then to reprogram them.

Another protagonist is Milton Friedman, “*the theologian of the neoliberal market*”. Han says, “*For Milton Friedman, the social state of shock after disasters is the opportunity, indeed the supreme moment, for the neoliberal reprogramming of society!*” Such “*shock deprives and empties the soul. It renders it defenceless, so that it willingly submits to radical reprogramming.*”

DATAISM AND DATAISTS. COUNTING IS NOT TELLING!

The medium of the first Enlightenment was reason. Numbers were opposed to myths. Reason “displaced” imagination, desire or corporeality. The dialectics of the Enlightenment then let this turn into (number) barbarism, which kills life. Ultimately, it is the barbarism of the Cartesian “split” of *res cogitans* and *res extensa*.

Today, Big Data is supposed to liberate knowledge from subjective arbitrariness in the course of a second enlightenment. If the second enlightenment relies on numbers, information and transparency, its inherent dialectic will turn into a barbarism of data.

Han points to Oscar Wilde, who said, “*the passions of most men are but quotations.*” He notes that we live “In stories”. Try not telling a story(s) for a day. The assured prognosis is your failure; probably after minutes!

Data and numbers are additive, not narrative. But meaning must be told, it cannot be counted. Counting is not narration. Wilhelm Salber says in his book “*Konstruktion Psychologischer Behandlung*” (“*Architecture of psychological handling/treatment*”),¹ “*The mental construction system formulates its developmental possibilities*” in “stories”, “*meaning figures or symbols*”. Han notes in the same context: “*Data fills the emptiness of meaning*”. Numbers and data are sexualised and elevated to a fetish!

Han suggests that “*quantified optimised self*” takes on pornographic features. Dataists copulate with data, think data is sexy. One speaks of “*relentless digital datasexuals*”. “*The digitus approaches the pballus*”.

Attention! Undead!

Time gnaws at us. We never see it. We only notice its effects, like the wilting of flowers or our skin, the colour change of

the clouds, the obese beer belly, etc. We tell and retell our “*being in the world*”.

Stored data are countable but do not replace stories we should tell.

RESUMEE |

In the Zeit Magazine interview of 2014, Byung-Chul Han is presented with great justification as a philosopher who “*with a few sentences can bring down thought structures that support our everyday life*”.

If, like Peter F. Drucker, one regards the management business as a >humanities discipline<, then B-C. Han certainly belongs in the first row of business-relevant phenomenologists, i.e. the philosophers from everyday life who bring light into the darkness of shadow organisations with precisely non-everyday insights. This puts him in a line with N. N. Taleb, W. Salber or P. Verhaeghe.

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