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Bridging Freudian Death Drive and Contemporary Organizational Dynamics: Leading adaptive spaces for ambidexterity

ANDERSON DE SOUZA SANT'ANNA
ESCOLA DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO DE EMPRESAS DE SÃO PAULO (FGV-EAESP)

FATIMA BAYMA OLIVEIRA
FGV EBAPE - ESCOLA BRASILEIRA DE ADMINISTRAÇÃO PÚBLICA E DE EMPRESAS

DANIELA MARTINS DINIZ
UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SÃO JOÃO DEL REI (UFSJ)

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Introduction

In psychoanalytic theory, Freud (1920) introduces the death drive, or "Thanatos", describing the human tendency towards self-destruction, aggression, and compulsive repetition of detrimental behaviors. This drive operates alongside the life drive (Eros), oriented towards survival, propagation, and pleasure.

The death drive manifests through repetitive actions leading to stability and stagnation, creating a paradox between creation and destruction. Integrating these concepts with organizational theory provides insights into organizational behavior. By understanding the unconscious motivations driving repetitive and potentially destructive behaviors, leaders can address resistance to change, foster innovation, and enhance adaptability and resilience. This approach bridges individual psychological dynamics with collective organizational practices, offering a framework for improving leadership and organizational culture.

Organizational culture encompasses shared values, beliefs, rituals, and norms shaping behavior and practices (Schein, 2010; Chatman & O'Reilly, 2016). Repetition manifests in routines and procedures, providing order and predictability. However, excess can lead to rigidity, resistance to change, and a lack of innovation.

In organizational settings, repetition presents a dual-edged sword. It contributes to stability and efficiency (exploitation) but can hinder development and innovation (exploration). Organizational inertia arises when repetitive routines become deeply ingrained, resisting necessary changes (Hannan & Freeman, 1984; Gilbert, 2005). This stifles innovation, reduces responsiveness, and can lead to decline (March, 1991; Gilbert, 2005).

Repetition can stagnate creativity and innovation, as rigid processes leave little room for new ideas. This environment leads to disengagement and risk aversion among employees (Amabile, 1996). Monotonous tasks diminish job satisfaction, motivation, and productivity, and increase turnover rates (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). Organizations that ignore the monotony of repetitive tasks risk losing valuable talent and performance (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2009; Knight, Patterson & Dawson, 2020).

Dysfunctional behaviors can also become normalized through repetition, making them difficult to address (Einarsen, Aasland, & Skogstad, 2007; Harms, Credé, Tynan, Leon, & Jeung, 2017). Leaders must balance efficiency with adaptability, as rigid repetition limits an organization's ability to adapt to changes (March, 1991; Shoss, 2017).

In this context, this article explores the implications of the death drive within organizational culture, examining how repetitive behaviors impact dynamics and how leadership can create adaptive spaces. Drawing from Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey (2007), Uhl-Bien & Arena (2018), Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995), and Winnicott (1971), adaptive spaces facilitate change, innovation, and navigation of the death drive. Understanding psychoanalytic drivers helps leaders foster resilient, adaptable cultures.

Integrating psychoanalytic theory with organizational practices enhances understanding of unconscious forces shaping behavior. This interdisciplinary approach achieves several objectives: exploring unconscious motivations (Kets de Vries, 2004; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2020); enhancing leadership practices (Diamond, 2017; Kahn, 2018); creating adaptive spaces (Winnicott, 1971; Uhl-Bien, Marion, & McKelvey, 2007; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2020); fostering resilience (Schein, 2010); supporting psychological well-being (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2009; Knight, Patterson, & Dawson, 2020); and processing complex and contradictory experiences (Lacan, 1977; Gabriel, 1999; Arnaud, 2012).

As a result, this article aims to offer valuable insights into the complex and paradoxical forces at play within organizations, enhancing leadership practices and organizational development.

The Freudian Notion of Death Drive

The death drive, as articulated by Freud (1920) and further elaborated by Lacan (1977), provides a powerful framework for understanding the deeper, often unconscious forces shaping individual and collective behaviors within organizations. Integrating these psychoanalytic insights into organizational theory and leadership practices helps in comprehending the dynamics that drive repetition, resistance to change, and potential transformation within organizational settings (Gabriel, 1999; Arnaud, 2012).

A central concept in Freudian psychoanalytic theory, the death drive proposes a human tendency towards aggression, self-destruction, and compulsive repetition of behaviors. This drive operates alongside the life drive (Eros), oriented towards survival, pleasure, and reproduction. The interplay between these drives creates a dynamic tension influencing human behavior and psychological processes (Freud, 1920).

Freud (1920) observed that individuals often repeat traumatic experiences, suggesting an unconscious drive seeking to return to an earlier, inorganic state. This compulsion to repeat, he argued, manifests the death drive, opposing life-preserving instincts and pushing individuals towards entropy and dissolution, undermining their well-being and stability.

The death drive's implications extend beyond individual psychology to influence group dynamics and organizational behavior. Repetition, a core aspect of the death drive, can establish rigid routines within organizations. While these routines provide structure and predictability, they can also stifle innovation and adaptability, leading to stagnation (Gilbert, 2005; Shoss, 2017).

Lacan (1977) further developed the death drive concept, linking it to the symbolic order and the Real. He argued the death drive represents a desire to return to a state of non-differentiation, dissolving distinctions imposed by the symbolic order (language, social norms). This drive manifests in behaviors disrupting the symbolic order, such as acts of rebellion, transgression, and self-sabotage.

He also explained that the death drive manifests through repetitive behaviors, seen in acts of compulsive repetition of harmful behaviors, and persistent return to traumatic experiences. These behaviors reveal an underlying drive towards self-undoing or dissolution, deeply entwined with the subject's encounter with the Real (Lacan, 1977; Fink, 1995; Verhaeghe, 2001).

However, a crucial aspect of Lacan's reinterpretation is his focus on jouissance associated with the death drive. Jouissance is a form of enjoyment that goes beyond pleasure and can be painful or excessive, deriving satisfaction from transgressive or self-destructive acts compelled by the death drive. It seeks experiences disrupting the subject's equilibrium within the symbolic order (Lacan, 1977; Evans, 1996; Žižek, 1991).

Lacan's death drive is also reflected in his concept of "lamella", describing an indestructible, ever-persistent life force existing beyond the biological organism. The lamella represents a perpetually striving drive, reminding of the inescapable presence of the death drive within the psyche (Lacan, 1974; Chiesa, 2007; Johnston, 2005).

In organizational culture studies, Lacan's ideas suggest the death drive can challenge established norms and structures. Employees might engage in behaviors undermining organizational goals, resisting change initiatives, or perpetuating dysfunctional practices, seen as attempts to confront the Real, the underlying truths and anxieties that organizational culture seeks to manage or repress (Arnaud, 2012; Diamond, 2017).

The implications of the death drive for organizational leadership are also profound. Leaders must recognize this drive's presence and potential to disrupt organizational functioning. Understanding the unconscious motivations behind repetitive and destructive behaviors enables leaders to develop strategies addressing these underlying issues. This might involve creating "adaptive spaces" allowing for the expression and transformation of these drives, harnessing their potential for creativity and renewal (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2020).

Death Drive and Organizational Culture

Organizational culture encompasses the shared values, beliefs, rituals, and norms that shape behavior and practices within an organization. This cultural framework influences member interactions, decision-making, and work approaches, ultimately affecting organizational effectiveness and adaptability. Repetition, norms, and rituals play crucial roles in maintaining and reinforcing organizational culture but also pose significant challenges that can impede innovation and change (Schein, 2010).

In organizational culture level, repetition refers to the recurrent behaviors, routines, and practices ingrained within an organization. These repetitive actions provide stability and predictability, essential for maintaining order and efficiency. Standard operating procedures, regular meetings, and established workflows are examples of repetitive elements that ensure consistency and reliability in operations.

However, excessive repetition can lead to organizational inertia, where rigid adherence to routines stifles creativity and adaptability. Studies have shown that organizations with highly repetitive cultures often struggle to innovate and respond to changing environments. For instance, March (1991) highlighted the "exploration-exploitation" trade-off, where organizations focused on exploiting existing knowledge and routines may neglect exploring new ideas and opportunities, leading to long-term stagnation.

Similarly, norms, as informal rules and expectations, guide behavior within an organization. These norms, established through repeated interactions and shared experiences, create a cohesive and predictable environment, promoting cooperation and coordination. Research has shown that strong organizational norms can contribute to a positive work environment by fostering trust, commitment, and a shared sense of purpose. For example, Chatman and O'Reilly (2016) found that congruence between individual and organizational values leads to higher job satisfaction and performance.

Conversely, rigid norms can inhibit change by discouraging deviation from established practices. Organizations with inflexible norms may resist new ideas and approaches, leading to a culture of conformity and resistance to change.

Furthermore, rituals, as formalized activities and ceremonies, reinforce organizational values and norms. These can include regular meetings, award ceremonies, team-building events, and other symbolic actions that promote unity and shared identity. Rituals socialize new members, celebrate achievements, and reinforce the organization's mission and values.

Meyer and Rowan (1977) argue that rituals and ceremonies legitimize organizational activities, enhancing stability and continuity. However, they also caution that these rituals can become "myth and ceremony", disconnected from actual organizational effectiveness. When rituals become mere formalities, they can lose their meaning and fail to inspire genuine engagement and commitment among employees.

While repetition, routines, norms, and rituals are essential for maintaining organizational culture, they also present challenges that can hinder adaptability and innovation. Excessive repetition and routines can lead to boredom, disengagement, and a lack of motivation among employees. Norms that discourage dissent and promote conformity can stifle creativity

and prevent adaptation to new challenges. Rituals that lose their symbolic power can become hollow and ineffective.

To address these challenges, researchers emphasize balancing stability with flexibility. Feldman and Pentland (2003) suggest viewing routines as dynamic and capable of change, rather than static. By fostering a culture that encourages experimentation and learning, organizations can adapt routines and norms to align with evolving goals and environments.

Moreover, leadership plays a crucial role in managing the tension between stability and change, allowing for an ambidextrous organization (Tushman and O'Reilly, 1996). Leaders can create adaptive spaces within organizations that enable innovation and transformation while maintaining core values and structure. This involves recognizing the need for both exploiting existing capabilities and exploring new opportunities, as suggested by Tushman and O'Reilly (1996).

In essence, research on repetition, routines, norms, and rituals in organizational culture highlights their dual role in providing stability and potentially hindering change. Understanding the complexities and challenges associated with these elements is essential for fostering a dynamic and resilient organizational culture. By integrating insights from psychoanalytic theory and promoting adaptive leadership practices, organizations can balance maintaining effective routines and encouraging innovation and adaptability.

Leadership: Addressing the death drive to foster ambidexterity

Playing a pivotal role in shaping organizational culture and dynamics, effective leadership involves creating environments that support innovation, adaptability, and psychological well-being, enabling organizations to navigate contemporary business complexities (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018; Edmondson, 2019).

"Adaptive spaces", as conceptualized by Uhl-Bien and collaborators, are environments where formal and informal structures intersect, allowing the free flow of information and ideas, fostering innovation and adaptability (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). These spaces bridge the gap between the operational system, focusing on efficiency and reliability, and the entrepreneurial system, emphasizing exploration and innovation.

Uhl-Bien and Arena (2018) argue that adaptive spaces enable organizations to respond to complex and dynamic environments by facilitating information and idea flow across different levels and functions. These spaces support the emergence of new ideas, experimentation, and the integration of diverse perspectives, critical for organizational adaptability and resilience.

According to them, leaders are crucial in establishing and maintaining these spaces by promoting a culture that values experimentation, diversity of thought, ambidexterity culture, and open communication. By encouraging employees to explore new ideas, leaders help organizations stay responsive to changing conditions and emerging opportunities (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

In this sense, creating adaptive spaces involves key leadership practices. Firstly, leaders must break down silos and encourage cross-functional collaboration by creating multidisciplinary teams and opportunities for employees from different areas to work together. Facilitating these interactions ensures diverse perspectives are considered, leading to more innovative solutions (Edmondson, 2019).

Secondly, leaders need to provide psychological safety, as emphasized by Edmondson (1999, 2019). Psychological safety refers to an environment where individuals feel safe to take risks, make mistakes, and voice opinions without fear of negative consequences (Edmondson, 1999). Leaders can foster psychological safety by modeling vulnerability, encouraging open dialogue, and responding constructively to failure, creating a supportive environment essential for exploring new ideas and taking innovative risks (Edmondson, 2019).

Another approach is to create what Winnicott (1965, 1971) termed “transitional environments” - spaces where individuals can experiment with new ways of working in a supportive and secure setting. In an organizational context, transitional environments allow individuals to explore new ideas and ways of working without fear of immediate failure or judgment. These environments act as a buffer between the known and the unknown.

Winnicott’s idea emphasizes the importance of creating a “holding environment” where people feel secure enough to take risks and innovate. This concept highlights the need for psychological safety and support in fostering creativity and adaptation within organizations (Winnicott, 1965; Edmondson, 2019).

At the organizational level, leaders can establish these environments by providing opportunities for creative problem-solving, reflective practices, and professional development. By doing so, they create a buffer allowing employees to explore and innovate without immediate performance pressure.

Furthermore, leaders can draw on Nonaka and Takeuchi’s concept of “Ba”, which emphasizes shared contexts for knowledge creation. “Ba” represents a space - physical, virtual, or mental - where individuals interact and share knowledge, generating new ideas and insights.

Knowledge creation is a dynamic and continuous process occurring through interactions within “Ba”, fostering dialogue, collaboration, and the synthesis of diverse knowledge essential for innovation and learning (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

By facilitating interactions and knowledge sharing across the organization, leaders ensure new ideas are generated and integrated into the organizational fabric. This involves creating physical and virtual spaces for collaboration, sharing insights, and co-creating solutions (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Effective leadership also involves recognizing and addressing manifestations of the death drive in organizational behavior. Leaders must be attuned to signs of organizational inertia, such as rigid adherence to routines, resistance to change, and employee disengagement. Proactively addressing these issues can disrupt destructive patterns and foster a culture of continuous improvement. This might involve change management initiatives, promoting a growth mindset, and encouraging ongoing feedback and reflection (Kotter, 2012).

Combining these ideas into organizational practices involves establishing ambidextrous culture, structures, and processes that allow for the intersection of formal and informal systems, enabling information flow and the emergence of new ideas (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

In this context, leaders must create a culture of psychological safety where individuals feel supported to take risks and experiment, fostering trust, open communication, and a supportive environment (Edmondson, 2019). Organizations should provide shared spaces, both physical and virtual, designed to facilitate dialogue, learning, and integrating diverse perspectives (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2019).

To understand the theoretical and practical applications of psychoanalytic concepts, particularly the death drive, and innovation theory, it is crucial to explore how them can be synthesized to address organizational challenges. Table 1 outlines the key theoretical contributions, associated concepts, and their implications for organizational practices.

TABLE 1

Bridging psychoanalysis and organizational theory concepts: Implications for organizational practices

Theoretical Contributions	Concept	Organizational Implications	Synthesis and Application
Psychoanalysis	Death Drive	Repetition, Norms, and Rituals	The death drive explains the unconscious motivations behind repetitive behaviors and resistance to change. By recognizing these drives, leaders can understand and address the deeper fears and anxieties that underpin organizational inertia.
	Compulsion to Repeat	Stability *vs.* Rigidity	Repetitive behaviors provide stability but can lead to rigidity. Understanding the compulsion to repeat helps leaders balance the need for stability with the flexibility required for innovation.
	Aggression and Self-Destruction	Dysfunctional Practices	These drives can manifest as counterproductive behaviors within organizations. Leaders can address these behaviors by creating environments that channel this energy into positive, creative outlets.
	Transitional Environment	Psychological Safety	Transitional environments provide a safe space for experimentation, reducing fear and resistance to change. Leaders can create these spaces to support risk-taking and the exploration of new ideas.
Organizational Theory	Organizational Culture	Shared Values and Beliefs	Organizational culture shapes the behavior and practices of individuals within an organization, influencing how members interact, make decisions, and approach their work. Recognizing the influence of unconscious drives on this culture can help leaders foster a more adaptive and innovative environment.
	Organizational Culture of Ambidexterity	Balance of Exploitation and Exploration	Organizational ambidexterity involves balancing the exploitation of existing capabilities with the exploration of new opportunities. Leaders can cultivate an ambidextrous culture to sustain innovation and adaptability.
	"Ba"	Knowledge Creation and Sharing	"Ba" emphasizes shared contexts for interaction and knowledge creation. By facilitating these interactions, leaders can integrate diverse perspectives, enhancing organizational adaptability and resilience.
	Adaptive Space	Innovation and Adaptability	Adaptive spaces intersect formal and informal structures, facilitating the free flow of information and ideas. This environment allows for the constructive expression of the death drive, fostering innovation and adaptability.

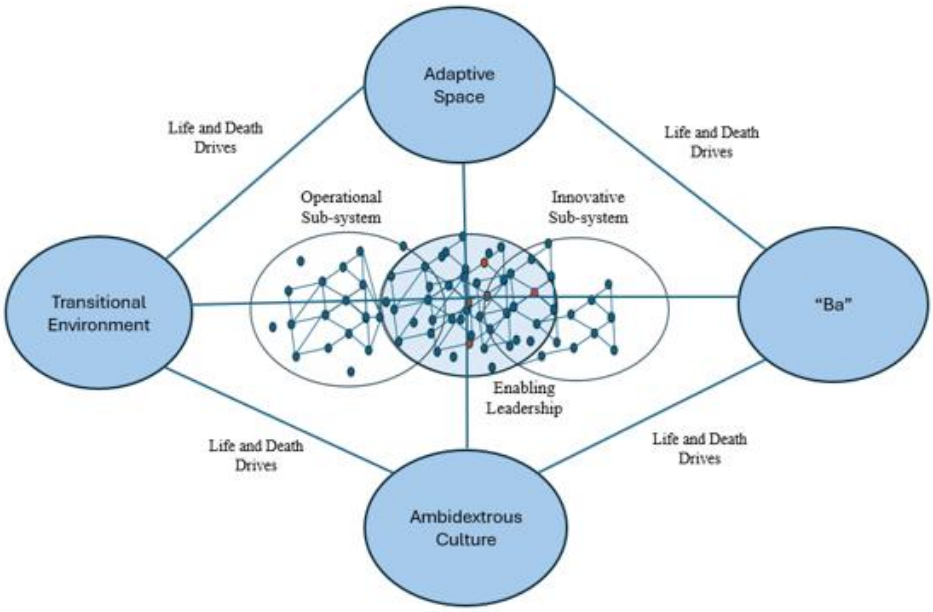
Source: Developed by the author.

In essence, incorporating these psychoanalytic and organizational concepts provides an ambidextrous framework for understanding and addressing the challenges of repetition and resistance within organizations. Leaders can use this framework to create environments that support innovation and adaptability while recognizing and managing the underlying unconscious dynamics that influence behavior (Kets de Vries, 2001; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

Bridging Psychoanalysis and Organizational Theory

Integrating psychoanalytic concepts, specifically the death drive, with organizational theory provides a nuanced understanding of the underlying forces shaping organizational behavior. This synthesis bridges individual unconscious motivations and collective organizational dynamics, offering a comprehensive framework for analyzing and improving organizational culture and leadership practices (Freud, 1920; Lacan, 1977). Figure 1 illustrates this dynamic interaction, showing how these elements influence each other and contribute to organizational adaptability and innovation.

FIGURE 1
Conceptual Model



Source: Developed by the author.

According to Figure 1, the death drive represents unconscious motivations towards self-destruction, aggression, and compulsive repetition of behaviors (Freud, 1920). In organizations, this drive can manifest as resistance to change, perpetuation of dysfunctional practices, and organizational inertia (Kets de Vries, 2001). These repetitive actions provide stability and predictability, essential for maintaining order and efficiency (March, 1991). However, excessive repetition can lead to rigidity and stifle innovation (March, 1991).

Adaptive spaces (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018), "Ba" (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), and transitional environments (Winnicott, 1965) are environments where formal and informal structures intersect, allowing the free flow of information and ideas. These spaces facilitate innovation and adaptability by providing a safe environment for experimentation and the exploration of new ideas.

Enabling leaders (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018) or "holders" (Winnicott, 1965) play a crucial role in creating and maintaining these adaptive spaces. They recognize and manage the unconscious dynamics of the death drive and facilitate psychological safety (Edmondson, 2019). They support knowledge sharing and collaboration, ensuring that the potentially destructive energy of the death drive is channeled into positive, creative activities (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

The interaction between these components is dynamic and paradoxical. The death drive fuels repetitive behaviors that provide stability but can also lead to organizational inertia and

resistance to change (Kets de Vries, 2001). To balance the stability provided by repetition, adaptive spaces are created where new ideas can be safely explored, preventing stagnation and stimulating innovation (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

Practical Framework for Enabling Leadership in Adaptive Spaces

In this interplay, leaders are instrumental in fostering adaptive spaces by ensuring psychological safety, supporting collaboration, and facilitating the flow of information and ideas (Edmondson, 2019), thereby preventing and mediating the paradoxical vicissitudes of the death drive. Effective leadership involves recognizing the influence of the death drive and channeling its energy into positive, creative activities through adaptive spaces and an ambidextrous culture of innovation (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

By understanding and leading this dynamic, leaders can foster a culture of adaptability, innovation, and psychological well-being, ultimately enhancing organizational effectiveness and resilience. Table 2 provides a structured approach for leaders to analyze and foster transitional spaces within their organizations.

TABLE 2

Enabling Leadership in Adaptive Spaces: Practical Framework

Dimension	Element	Actions	Objectives
Understanding Organizational Culture	Assess Repetitive Behaviors	- Identify and map key routines, practices, and rituals. - Analyze the impact of repetitive behaviors on stability *vs.* rigidity. - Determine which behaviors hinder innovation.	- Balance stability and adaptability. - Foster an environment that supports both order and innovation.
	Uncover Unconscious Dynamics	- Conduct interviews and surveys to uncover fears and anxieties. - Use psychoanalytic tools to reveal hidden motivations. - Understand manifestations of the repetitive behaviors.	- Address underlying fears and anxieties. - Mitigate resistance to change. - Improve organizational health and morale.
Creating Adaptive Spaces	Facilitate Cross-Functional Collaboration	- Establish cross-functional teams. - Promote exchange of diverse ideas and perspectives. - Encourage open communication and knowledge sharing.	- Enhance innovation and problem-solving. - Break down silos within the organization.
	Promote Psychological Safety	- Foster an environment for risk-taking and idea expression. - Model vulnerability and openness. - Implement regular feedback sessions.	- Encourage creativity and risk-taking. - Build trust and open communication. - Support learning and development.
	Support Experimentation and Learning	- Create spaces for experimentation and creative problem-solving. - Allocate resources for innovative projects. - Provide opportunities for professional development.	- Foster a culture of continuous learning. - Encourage experimentation and innovation.
Managing the Repetitive Behaviors	Recognize and Address Destructive Patterns	- Identify destructive behaviors and patterns. - Develop strategies to disrupt negative patterns. - Provide coaching, counseling, or interventions as needed.	- Mitigate negative impacts of repetitive behaviors. - Foster positive and constructive behavior.

	Channel Energy into Positive Outlets	- Redirect energy into constructive activities. - Promote mental and emotional well-being programs. - Align individual goals with organizational mission and values.	- Enhance employee engagement and motivation. - Channel destructive energy into productive outcomes.
Evaluating and Sustaining Adaptive Spaces	Monitor and Evaluate Progress	- Implement metrics to track effectiveness of adaptive spaces. - Conduct regular assessments of culture and performance. - Use data for continuous improvement.	- Ensure effectiveness and relevance of adaptive spaces. - Foster a culture of continuous improvement.
	Sustain a Culture of Adaptability	- Embed adaptive space principles into core values. - Recognize and celebrate achievements and learnings. - Ensure leadership commitment to maintaining adaptive spaces.	- Maintain and evolve adaptive spaces in response to changing needs. - Promote long-term organizational adaptability and resilience.

Source: Developed by the author.

This analytical framework helps leaders systematically create and maintain transitional spaces within their organizations. By understanding and managing repetitive behaviors and unconscious dynamics, fostering adaptive spaces, and continually evaluating and sustaining these initiatives, leaders can build a culture that supports innovation, adaptability, and psychological well-being. Furthermore, by focusing on key elements of organizational culture and integrating psychoanalytic insights, they can create environments that support innovation, adaptability, and psychological well-being.

Discussion

Integrating the concept of the death drive into organizational theory offers a novel perspective on repetitive behaviors and resistance to change, providing a useful lens for understanding why organizations often exhibit inertia and cling to dysfunctional practices. Lacan (1977)'s expansion of this idea, emphasizing the role of the Real and the symbolic order, further enriches our understanding by highlighting how these unconscious forces disrupt established norms and structures.

This psychoanalytic perspective aligns with existing organizational research, such as Argyris and Schön (1996)'s theory on organizational learning and defensive routines, which similarly addresses resistance to change and the perpetuation of counterproductive behaviors.

The proposed conceptual model also emphasizes balancing repetition (bureaucratic organizational sub-system) with adaptive spaces (innovative organizational sub-system) to address the critical tension between stability and innovation identified in the literature (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). March (1991)'s exploration of the "exploration-exploitation" trade-off underscores the need for organizations to balance the efficient use of existing knowledge (exploitation) with the pursuit of new opportunities (exploration).

Similarly, Uhl-Bien and Arena (2018)'s concept of adaptive spaces, where formal and informal structures intersect to facilitate innovation, provides a practical framework for achieving this balance. By creating environments that support the free flow of information and ideas, leaders can mitigate the rigidity often associated with repetitive behaviors and promote a culture of continuous learning and adaptation.

This concept aligns closely with Winnicott (1965)'s psychoanalytical notion of transitional environments, emphasizing the importance of psychological safety, as proposed by Edmondson's research on psychological safety in teams, which highlights how a

psychologically safe environment enables individuals to take risks, voice their opinions, and engage in creative problem-solving without fear of negative consequences (Edmondson, 2019, 2009).

In addition, the proposed framework suggests specific strategies for leaders to foster psychological safety, such as modeling vulnerability, encouraging open dialogue, and providing regular, constructive feedback. These practices are crucial for creating secure and supportive environments necessary for innovation and adaptability.

Nonaka and Takeuchi's concept of "Ba" equally corroborates the framework by emphasizing the role of shared contexts in knowledge creation. Their work on knowledge management demonstrates how interactions within "Ba" lead to the synthesis of new ideas and insights, fostering organizational learning and innovation (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995, 2019). Furthermore, the framework's recommendation to facilitate cross-functional collaboration and provide physical and virtual spaces for knowledge sharing directly aligns with this concept. By integrating "Ba" into organizational practices, leaders can ensure diverse perspectives drive innovation and adaptability.

The role of leadership in managing the death drive and fostering adaptive spaces is also critical. Transformational leadership theories, such as those proposed by Bass and Avolio (1994), emphasize vision, inspiration, and support in driving organizational change. Equally, enabling leadership, ambidextrous leadership, and leadership in adaptive complex systems approaches emphasize the relevance of leaders in creating and sustaining adaptive spaces, mediating the exploitation-exploration paradoxes (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

Our conceptual model and framework extend these ideas by incorporating psychoanalytic insights, suggesting that leaders must also recognize and manage unconscious dynamics influencing behavior. This holistic approach enables leaders to channel the potentially destructive energy of the death drive into positive, creative activities, enhancing organizational resilience and effectiveness.

By synthesizing psychoanalytic concepts with organizational theory, this approach offers deeper insights into the unconscious forces that shape behavior, as well as practical strategies for fostering innovation, adaptability, and psychological well-being. This synthesis aligns with and extends contemporary literature, offering new avenues for research and practice in organizational leadership and development. Through continuous evaluation and a commitment to creating adaptive spaces, leaders can build dynamic, resilient organizations capable of thriving in complex and rapidly changing environments.

Theoretical significance

Integrating psychoanalytic concepts with organizational theory. the proposed model and analytical framework deepen our understanding of organizational behavior by elucidating the unconscious forces driving individual and collective actions and suggesting strategies for fostering innovation, adaptability, and psychological well-being within organizations.

From a psychoanalytic perspective, integrating the death drive into organizational theory extends this concept beyond individual psychology to organizational dynamics. Freud's death drive, with its emphasis on self-destructive tendencies and compulsive repetition, typically discussed in personal psychopathology, now highlights how these unconscious drives manifest as resistance to change, dysfunctional practices, and organizational inertia. This application provides a novel lens for analyzing and addressing deep-seated issues hindering organizational effectiveness (Freud, 1920; Lacan, 1977).

Lacan's elaboration on the death drive, particularly his focus on the Real and the symbolic order, further enriches this theoretical contribution. It emphasizes how unconscious drives disrupt established norms and structures, aligning with Lacan's ideas about the tension

between the symbolic order - rules, language, culture - and the Real - unrepresentable, traumatic truths (Lacan, 1977).

In innovation studies, the framework addresses the critical tension between stability and innovation, a central theme in organizational studies. It balances the stability provided by repetitive behaviors with the creation of adaptive spaces, facilitating the free flow of information and ideas crucial for fostering innovation and adaptability (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

Additionally, Winnicott's psychoanalytical concept of the transitional environment and Edmondson's research on psychological safety, which emphasize creating secure environments for innovation, contribute to organizational theory by highlighting the role of psychological safety in enabling risk-taking and creative problem-solving (Edmondson, 2019; Winnicott, 1965).

Furthermore, Nonaka and Takeuchi's concept of "Ba" underscores the importance of interactions and shared experiences in fostering organizational learning and innovation. By incorporating "Ba" into the framework, the model emphasizes knowledge sharing and cross-functional collaboration, essential for organizational effectiveness in dynamic environments (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

The framework's focus on leadership, particularly recognizing and managing the unconscious dynamics of the death drive, also offers a holistic approach to organizational development. Combining transformational leadership theories with psychoanalytic insights, it suggests that effective leadership involves not only vision and inspiration but also awareness of the unconscious forces influencing behavior (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

By integrating these concepts with innovation studies, this article significantly contributes to the development of relational leadership approaches. It emphasizes the importance of relationships, interactions, and dynamic contexts in shaping organizational behavior (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Understanding and managing unconscious processes and emotional dynamics enhance relational leadership by focusing on the quality of interactions and human connections. Leaders can create a climate of psychological safety, fostering collaboration and innovation.

By integrating these fields, the conceptual model and framework provide a deeper understanding of unconscious forces shaping organizational behavior and offers practical strategies for fostering innovation, adaptability, and psychological well-being. These contributions extend existing theories and offer new avenues for research and practice, enhancing our ability to build dynamic, resilient organizations capable of thriving in complex and rapidly changing environments.

Practical implications

Integrating psychoanalytic concepts, particularly the death drive, with organizational theory provides leaders with a comprehensive framework to understand and lead complex organizational dynamics. This synthesis offers practical strategies to foster innovation, adaptability, and psychological well-being, thereby enhancing overall organizational effectiveness.

One primary implication for leaders is recognizing and managing unconscious dynamics driving organizational behavior. The death drive manifests as resistance to change, perpetuation of dysfunctional practices, and organizational inertia. Leaders must identify these behaviors and understand their psychological causes (Freud, 1920; Lacan, 1977). This involves training on psychoanalytic concepts, encouraging open discussions about fears and anxieties, and using tools like surveys and interviews to uncover unconscious motivations.

Furthermore, leaders must balance the stability provided by repetitive behaviors with fostering innovation. The framework emphasizes creating adaptive spaces where formal and informal structures intersect, allowing for the free flow of information and ideas (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). Establishing cross-functional teams, promoting knowledge sharing, and encouraging collaboration across departments can ensure organizational dynamism while maintaining necessary stability.

Psychological safety is crucial for an innovative and adaptable culture. Leaders play a key role in creating environments where employees feel safe to take risks, voice opinions, and engage in creative problem-solving without fear of negative consequences (Edmondson, 2019). Practical steps include modeling vulnerability, encouraging constructive feedback, and creating open dialogue spaces. Addressing behaviors that undermine psychological safety ensures all employees feel respected and valued.

In addition, adaptive spaces are essential for fostering innovation and adaptability. Leaders can create these by providing resources for experimentation, such as time and budget for innovative projects, and establishing environments designed for creativity and collaboration (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995). Promoting a culture of continuous learning through professional development ensures organizational agility in responding to emerging challenges.

The destructive energy of the death drive can also be redirected into positive activities. Leaders can encourage employees to engage in mental and emotional well-being activities, such as mindfulness training, wellness programs, and team-building exercises. Aligning individual goals with the organization's mission and values helps employees find meaning and purpose in their work, channeling energy into productive outcomes.

Moreover, leaders should implement metrics to track the effectiveness of adaptive spaces and other initiatives aimed at fostering innovation and adaptability. Regular assessments of organizational culture and performance help identify improvement areas and ensure responsiveness to changing conditions. Using data and feedback for continuous improvement maintains the relevance and effectiveness of strategies. Sustaining a culture of adaptability requires a long-term leadership commitment.

This involves embedding the principles of adaptive spaces into core values and practices, recognizing and celebrating accomplishments and learnings, and ensuring leadership at all levels is committed to maintaining and evolving adaptive spaces. Proactively responding to external changes ensures organizational agility and resilience.

However, implementing psychoanalytic concepts within organizational theory poses several challenges. The abstract and complex nature of psychoanalytic concepts makes them difficult to translate into actionable strategies. Simplified explanations, practical examples, training sessions, and workshops can help leaders apply these theories in everyday organizational settings (Hirschhorn, 1997).

Equally, the lack of empirical validation of the proposed framework limits its practical applicability and acceptance. Conducting empirical studies, including case studies and quantitative research, is crucial to provide evidence of the framework's effectiveness in various organizational contexts.

Furthermore, the framework assumes a certain level of psychological literacy among leaders, which may not be present across all contexts. Providing foundational training in psychological principles and developing accessible resources can help leaders understand and apply psychoanalytic concepts effectively.

Additionally, overemphasis on psychoanalytic theory might overshadow other important psychological and organizational theories. Integrating insights from behavioral, cognitive, and social psychology can provide a more balanced understanding of organizational behavior (Schein, 2010).

It is also important to consider that organizational cultures and structures vary widely, impacting the effectiveness of the proposed strategies. Customizing the framework to fit different organizational contexts through thorough assessments of culture, structure, and specific needs before implementation is essential. Organizations often resist change, especially when addressing deep-seated unconscious dynamics and altering established routines.

Engaging in change management practices with clear communication, stakeholder involvement, and gradual implementation can help mitigate this resistance. Establishing and maintaining adaptive spaces that balance stability with innovation is challenging, particularly in organizations with rigid hierarchies and siloed departments. Encouraging cross-functional collaboration, establishing multidisciplinary teams, providing resources for experimentation, and regularly assessing and adjusting adaptive spaces are key strategies.

Fostering psychological safety, where employees feel safe to take risks and voice opinions without fear of negative consequences, is also challenging. Leaders can model vulnerability and openness, encourage open dialogue and constructive feedback, and promptly address behaviors undermining psychological safety.

Sustaining a culture of adaptability requires ongoing leadership effort and commitment. Embedding adaptive spaces' principles into core values and practices, recognizing and celebrating accomplishments and learnings, and ensuring leadership at all levels remains committed to adaptive spaces are essential strategies.

Finally, ethical considerations and privacy concerns are significant when applying psychoanalytic concepts in organizational contexts. Developing and adhering to ethical guidelines and policies, ensuring transparency, and obtaining consent when using psychological insights in organizational practices are crucial. Regularly reviewing and updating ethical standards is also important.

By addressing these challenges through targeted strategies and ongoing evaluation, organizations can effectively integrate psychoanalytic concepts with organizational theory, fostering innovation, adaptability, and psychological well-being. This comprehensive approach not only enhances overall organizational effectiveness but also builds dynamic, resilient organizations capable of thriving in complex and rapidly changing environments.

Conclusion

In this article, one explored integrating psychoanalytic concepts, particularly the notion of the death drive, with organizational theory to understand the underlying dynamics shaping organizational behavior. This synthesis resulted in a theoretical model and analytical framework offering practical strategies for leaders aiming to foster innovation, adaptability, and psychological well-being within their organizations. Manifesting as resistance to change and the perpetuation of dysfunctional practices, the death drive can be effectively addressed by understanding its deep psychological causes (Freud, 1920; Lacan, 1977).

This recognition allows leaders to intervene more strategically and empathetically, mitigating these dynamics' negative impacts. Furthermore, balancing the stability provided by repetitive behaviors with the creation of adaptive spaces emphasizes the intersection of formal and informal structures to facilitate ambidextrous organizations (Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018). By establishing cross-functional teams, promoting knowledge sharing, and encouraging collaboration, leaders can ensure their organizations remain dynamic and responsive to change while maintaining necessary stability.

Fostering psychological safety is crucial for an innovative and adaptable organizational culture. Leaders play a key role in creating an environment where employees feel safe to take risks, voice opinions, and engage in creative problem-solving without fear of negative consequences (Edmondson, 2019).

Practical steps include modeling vulnerability and openness, encouraging constructive feedback, and creating spaces for open dialogue. Moreover, creating and sustaining adaptive spaces is essential for fostering innovation and adaptability. Leaders can support these spaces by providing resources for experimentation, such as time and budget for innovative projects, and by establishing environments designed to facilitate creativity and collaboration (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995).

Promoting a culture of continuous learning by offering professional development opportunities ensures the organization remains agile and capable of responding to emerging challenges. Redirecting the destructive energy of the death drive into positive activities is critical. Encouraging employees to engage in activities promoting mental and emotional well-being, such as mindfulness training, wellness programs, and team-building exercises, can help channel their energy into productive outcomes. Supporting individual goals with ethnicization's mission and values enhances engagement and motivation.

To track the effectiveness of adaptive spaces and other initiatives aimed at fostering innovation and adaptability, leaders should implement metrics. Regular assessments of organizational culture and performance can identify areas for improvement and ensure responsiveness to changing conditions.

Using data and feedback for continuous improvement helps maintain these strategies' relevance and effectiveness. However, sustaining a culture of adaptability requires a long-term commitment from leadership. This involves embedding the principles of adaptive spaces into the organization's core values and practices, recognizing and celebrating achievements and learnings, and ensuring leadership at all levels is committed to maintaining and evolving adaptive spaces. Proactive responses to changes in the external environment ensure the organization remains agile and resilient.

While integrating psychoanalytic concepts with organizational theory provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and managing organizational dynamics, this study is not without limitations. The abstract nature of psychoanalytic concepts can make them challenging to operationalize in practical settings, potentially leading to misinterpretation or oversimplification.

Additionally, relying heavily on qualitative insights and theoretical synthesis may lack empirical rigor, limiting generalizability. Future research could benefit from incorporating more empirical studies to validate the proposed model and framework. The framework assumes a certain level of psychological literacy among leaders, which may not hold true across all contexts. Implementing these ideas may require additional training and education.

Moreover, the emphasis on psychological safety and adaptive spaces may face practical constraints due to varying organizational cultures and structures. Future research should explore the adaptability of the framework to different settings and consider integrating other psychological and organizational theories for a more holistic understanding of organizational behavior.

The dynamic nature of organizations means the relevance and applicability of the proposed model may change over time. Continuous refinement and adaptation of the framework will be necessary to address emerging challenges effectively. Future research should focus on empirical validation, incorporating diverse psychological and organizational theories, exploring contextual factors influencing strategy effectiveness, and investigating the role of individual differences.

Additionally, studying the potential of new technologies to support adaptive spaces and developing practical tools and guidelines for implementation can enhance understanding and application within organizational settings. Lastly, considering the broader societal and ethical implications of applying psychoanalytic concepts in organizational contexts is crucial. Examining issues related to privacy, consent, and the potential misuse of psychological insights

can help ensure ethical and responsible application, informing the development of guidelines and policies that protect organizational members' well-being.

Nonetheless, the integration of psychoanalytic theory with organizational culture and leadership offers valuable insights and practical strategies for creating healthier, more adaptive, and innovative organizations. By addressing both conscious and unconscious dynamics, leaders can foster environments that support continuous growth and transformation, enhancing organizational effectiveness and contributing to employees' overall well-being and engagement.

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