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THE PROFESSOR'S PREDICAMENT: HOW CAN I HAVE MY EXPERTISE WITHOUT IT HAVING ME?

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Professors rely upon expertise. As management scholars and teachers, we need to know our stuff. Our relationship with expertise, however, is tricky. Observers have expressed frustration with our field's epistemological perspective and wondered why existing ways of knowing and teaching are so resistant to change. One plausible explanation is that how we enact expertise in management studies makes sense—literally. That is, prevailing forms of expert behavior help professors construct and protect sensical understandings of self in relation to others. Drawing on constructive-developmental theory, I treat scholarship and teaching as meaning-making activities. Subject–object fusion in the context of the professor–expertise relationship means that many of us do not so much *have* our expertise as we *are* our expertise. This essay explores how meaning-making structures interact with the demands of academia to sustain disciplinary commitments to traditional ways of knowing and teaching. We are limited by commitments to expertise we have ourselves enacted. Many professors feel stuck; this essay outlines a path toward getting unstuck. I explain how a distinct double-loop learning methodology designed to promote subject–object separation can enhance our capacity to make meaning in more expansive ways, such that we have our expertise without it having us.

The environment that creates a management professor selects for expertise. In graduate school seminars, as researchers, at the front of the classroom, and in the eyes of our colleagues at tenure time, we survive professionally based on what we know and how well we show what we know. It is neither noteworthy nor surprising that the academic environment promotes expertise. Expertise is indispensable when one is charged, as professors are, with generating new knowledge and helping students explore existing knowledge. Like any evolutionary adaptation, our investment in expertise makes great sense when considered in the context of the environmental demands on us. At the same time, like most evolutionary adaptations, our commitment to expertise is often limiting. What enables us to survive may restrict our capacity to thrive in important ways. Expert behavior paradoxically sustains and constrains us.

The Oxford English Dictionary Online (2020a) defines an expert as "a person who is regarded or consulted as an authority on account of special skill, training, or knowledge" and expertise as "the quality or state of being expert" (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2020b). I have suggested that the *commitment to* expertise is often limiting; expertise itself is not. The distinction is critical. This essay is not about expertise, but rather how professors handle expertise, and how it handles them. I propose that *being expert* is a uniquely important element in the meaning-making efforts of many professors. Expert behavior is a response commonly deployed by professors to make sense of self in relation to others. It plays a key role in the negotiation of subject–object relations. Constructive-developmental theory explores patterned differences in how individuals are "subject to" certain elements of their world while managing to hold "as object" other elements. Most adults are subject to either the expectations of their social surround or the constraints of their self-authored identity (Kegan, 1982, 1994). Both forms of embeddedness—of "subject-to-ness"—nurture similar expert behaviors in academic environments, with deep implications for professors' capacity as both scholars and teachers. Whether I am subject to my need to be experienced by others as expert or subject to my need to experience myself as expert, if knowledge and intellect are the coin of the realm for demonstrating expertise, it makes self-protective sense to trade in familiar, predictable, and accessible currency. I have good reason to operate within tight disciplinary comfort zones, avoid ambiguous problem domains, research narrowly, and teach via lecture.

This essay retheorizes a familiar problem domain. Its theoretical contribution is in proposing double-loop learning possibilities where a single-loop approach has prevailed (Argyris & Schon, 1978).

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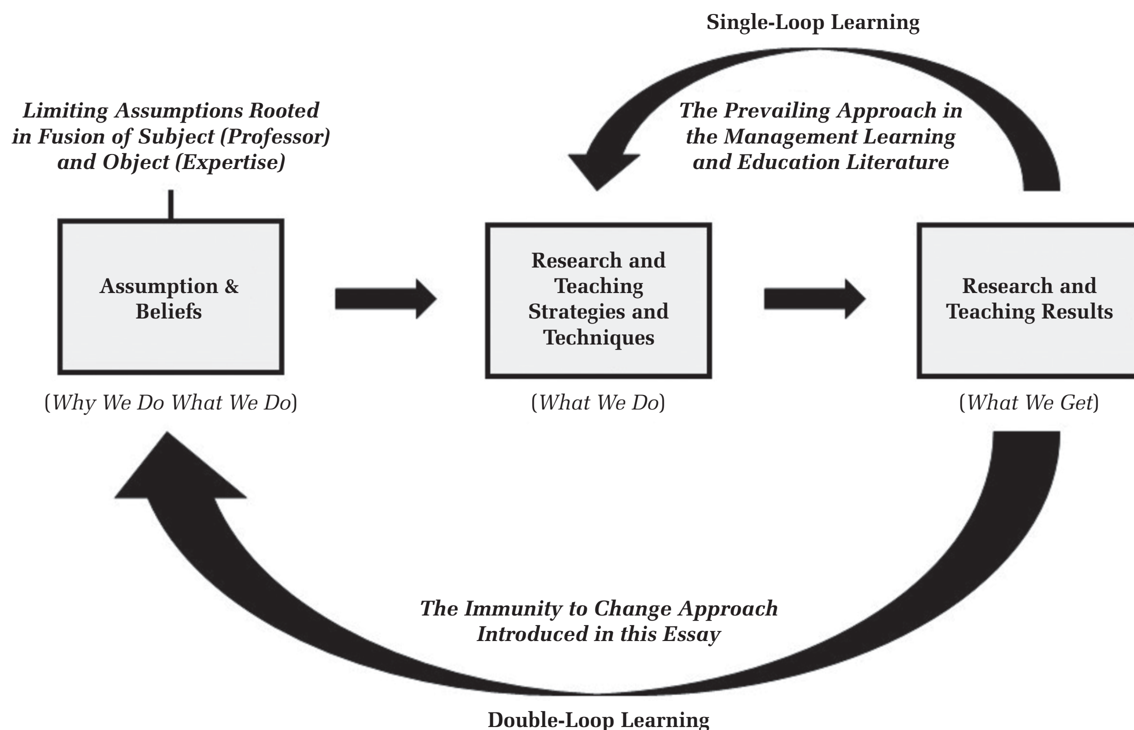
The management learning and education literature has long observed certain limitations in how we collectively enact our expertise inside and outside the classroom. The problem, these critiques hold, is that we over-commit to safe, narrow, jargon-laden, formal analytic teaching and research (e.g., Aguinis, Cummings, Ramani, & Cummings, 2020; Hay & Samra-Fredericks, 2019). When you get results you do not like, the single-loop approach entails adjusting your strategies and techniques in ways that directly generate different results (Argyris & Schon, 1978). This has been the *modus operandi* of the management learning and education literature (see Figure 1). In response to concerns over safe, narrow, and formal analytic teaching and research, authors have advised alternative teaching (e.g., Saggurthi & Thakur, 2016) and research methodologies (e.g., Harley, 2019). This single-loop approach has yielded an abundance of ideas about what we *should* be doing differently as scholars and teachers. Recurring laments about the content and style of our research and teaching, however, suggest that something stands in the way of many of us making the changes proposed by the literature. When a problem has been cognitively hashed and rehashed but persists—when we understand we could be doing better but we just never seem to change—it is likely that what is keeping us stuck is less a function of the solution itself than what the solution means to us. Our problem is not that we have failed to think of quite smart ways to do things differently. The problem, I suggest, is that our need to be and be seen as expert limits the range of behavioral options we consider viable.

Where solutions exist but are generally disregarded as implausible, single-loop learning has reached an impasse and a double-loop approach offers the best path forward. Double-loop learning involves surfacing, interrogating, and shifting assumptions and beliefs that restrict the range of behavioral options we consider viable (Argyris & Schon, 1978). Whereas single-loop learning answers *what* we might do differently, double-loop learning explores *why* we do what we do and revisits underlying assumptions to mobilize new behavioral possibilities. This, I contend, is the approach needed in relation to recurring concerns about safe, narrow, jargon-laden, formal analytic research and teaching. Accordingly, this essay flips the theoretical frame from single-loop to double-loop learning. Rather than chase symptoms with solutions, I turn the spotlight on the assumptions and beliefs anchoring the problem.

FIGURE 1
A Double-Loop Approach to Different Research and Teaching Results



It is not merely the content of our assumptions and beliefs that is of concern, it is our relationship to those things—our widespread inability to see and work on them—that keeps us stuck. Specifically, I propose that many of our self-limiting behaviors derive from subject–object fusion in the context of the professor–expertise relationship. Many of us do not so much *have* our expertise as we *are* our expertise. My perspective is ontologically distinct from that prevailing in the management learning and education literature. The literature does not explicitly identify subject–object fusion as a problem; indeed, it rests upon an unstated presumption of subject–object separation. That is, the literature has presumed that expertise (object) is outside of and distinct from professor (subject) such that the professor is—at least within the bounds of systemic pressures—broadly capable of reflecting on, handling, taking control of, and making choices about how to enact expertise. The literature has proposed new research and teaching methods, after all, with the expectation that professors can and will adopt them. Some do, but as I have noted, the recurring critiques of our discipline indicate than many do not. This essay, on the other hand, questions the presumption of subject–object separation, suggesting instead that many of us are more given to making meaning *through* our expertise than we are capable of making meaning *of* our expertise. In other words, I propose that many of us make sense of self and world *through* the experience of being regarded—by self and by others—as authorities on account of our training and knowledge. To the extent that expertise is thus integrated into our meaning-making efforts, it is challenging for us to obtain distance from and perspective on the forms of expertise to which we default. We have difficulty seeing and evaluating that which we see through.

The practical value of this essay follows from its theoretical contribution. I not only flip the theoretical frame from single-loop to double-loop learning, but I introduce a specific, flexible, and actionable double-loop process that suits the adaptive needs of professors. I explain how a methodology called the immunity to change (ITC) technique (Kegan & Lahey, 2001b, 2009), which was designed to induce subject–object separation, might be used to promote professor–expertise separation. The challenge for professors is being able to hold their expertise while relaxing their commitment to it, which in turn entails differentiating from the embeddedness—from the “subject-to-ness”—that spawned the commitment. How a person differentiates from embeddedness is contingent upon the evolutionary stage of meaning-making at which they operate. This essay leverages constructive-development theory to explore specific dynamics of this differentiation challenge. For many professors, relaxing one’s commitment to expertise entails differentiating from one’s social surround. For other professors, relaxing one’s commitment to expertise entails differentiating from one’s autonomous identity. In research and teaching roles, differentiation from embeddedness generates value.

While this essay departs from the management learning and education literature in key respects, it also complements that literature in an important way. As noted, I advocate a double-loop learning methodology that addresses subject–object fusion, while the existing literature has adopted a single-loop approach that assumes subject–object separation. This essay departs from the dominant approach to serve that approach. I argue that professor–expertise fusion precludes many of us from enacting the rich array of available alternatives to our disciplinary inclination toward safe, narrow, jargon-laden, formal analytic teaching and writing. As a means toward subject–object separation, the double-loop ITC methodology promises to help us leverage single-loop solutions that already exist. My purpose is to mobilize greater implementation of the wide range of research and teaching methodologies the literature proposes.

This essay first establishes what expertise means within the management discipline. Specifically, I examine what “being expert” means in the domains of management research and teaching, explore critiques of dominant ways of knowing, and consider why expertise is constructed as it is in the field. Then, the essay introduces constructive-developmental theory to analyze how professors build relationships to expertise that enable, protect, and constrain them. Bringing theory to life, I explore the challenges and perspectives of two fictional professors—I name them “Alan” and “Gabriela”—at the two most common developmental stages. The vignettes provide a textured look at how we commonly make meaning of the joys and pressures of our professional circumstances. Individual meaning-making dynamics, I suggest, help explain the persistence of prevailing disciplinary ways of knowing despite substantial criticism of the latter. If the way we make meaning is keeping us in place, the way forward is through enhancing our capacity to make meaning more objectively and capaciously. I propose the ITC technique as a practical means for professors to enhance their own meaning-making capacity. Academia’s longstanding cultural endorsement of intellect and expertise might

usefully be broadened to embody *developmental intelligence*,[1] or competence in continuously interrogating and expanding how one makes meaning. Developmental intelligence enables us to make meaning of the world in progressively more objective, more expansive, and more complex ways. I explain how professors can implement the ITC process to enhance their developmental intelligence and promote their own developmental growth.

WHAT DOES EXPERTISE MEAN TO US?

Numerous authors have explored how we construct and enact expertise in the management discipline. Their commentary has not always been flattering and has generally concluded that we would do well to relax and adjust our commitment to prevailing ways of knowing. I first examine what the literature has said about scholarly expertise in the management field and then turn to the commentary on teaching expertise.

Analysts of management scholarship have observed that the field defines expertise in excessively narrow, safe, and detached terms. Critics have lamented an ongoing "narrowing of research topics, theories, and methods" (Aguinis et al., 2020: 136). In an increasingly global disciplinary conversation (Corbett, Cornelissen, Delios, & Harley, 2014: 4), a set of powerful homogenizing pressures "threatens a narrowing of what is considered legitimate and rigorous research and of the kinds of theoretical and practical contributions that are made" (Harley, 2019: 288). Faced with demands to publish in journals with extremely high rejection rates (Rasheed & Priem, 2020), many professors play it safe by emphasizing productivity at the expense of creativity and innovation (Sandhu, Perera, & Sardeshmukh, 2019: 153). In a survey completed by 438 management professors, for example, 45% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, "the pressure to publish articles in peer-reviewed journals deters me from doing more creative research," and 49% either strongly agreed or agreed that "the pressure to publish articles in peer-reviewed journals deters me from using alternatives to more traditional approaches to research" (Miller, Taylor, & Bedeian, 2011: 433). Skill at strategically playing the publication game may carry more career value than competence at conducting substantive scholarship. "One need not be a scholar to publish," asserted Rasheed and Priem (2020: 160); "instead, one needs to learn and perfect the routines that lead to publication."

Those routines involve not just what we study but how we write. To many, our field is awash with "pompous, impenetrable writing; writing that seems driven by desires to demonstrate one's cleverness, or to accrue publications as ends in themselves" (Grey & Sinclair, 2006: 443). The style and content of academic research contributes to the oft-noted science–practice gap, which is "a disconnect between the knowledge that researchers are producing and the knowledge that practitioners are consuming" (Aguinis, Ramani, Alabduljader, Bailey, & Lee, 2019: 12–13). There is little evidence that management research impacts practice (Pettigrew & Starkey, 2016: 656) and much anecdotal evidence that practicing managers "find most academic research useless esoteric nonsense" (Miller et al., 2011: 435). Insulated from practitioner concerns and committed to the superiority of theoretical knowledge (Ungureanu & Bertolotti, 2018), we management professors have become, provoked Tourish (2020: 99), "genuine imposters" hiding behind pretentious jargon, pretending to do more important work than we actually do.

Analyses of management teaching have also featured themes of narrowness, safety, and detachment. Observers have noted "that a continued overreliance on scientific principles has developed a narrow and overly analytical form of management education which elevates a particular way of knowing" (Hay & Samra-Fredericks, 2019: 60). Business schools too often equate "good" thinking with analytic thinking while neglecting the importance of creativity, imagination, and personal commitment (Leavitt, 1989). Privileging detached, formal, and conceptual ways of knowing distances professors from the ambiguity of the phenomena they teach (Chia & Holt, 2008). Business schools' emphasis on technical disciplinary knowledge, while suited to solving well-defined problems, is inadequate to address the messy, ill-defined problems that characterize organizational life (Schon, 1983). Professors stay within the comfort zone of their narrow disciplinary focus, noted Bennis and O'Toole (2005: 101), who found "they are ill at ease subjectively analyzing multifaceted questions of policy and strategy, or examining cases that require judgment based on wisdom and experience in addition to—and sometimes opposed to—isolated facts." To professors committed to formal analytic thinking, opined Leavitt (1989: 42), "teaching about vision and creativity looked wrongheaded, second class, anti-intellectual—precisely what a proper education was intended to replace." The epistemology

[1] I thank Andy Fleming, CEO at The Developmental Edge, for creating and sharing with me the term "developmental intelligence."

underlying management teaching "is based on a representational model that parses management practice into a set of detached, predictable, and teachable categories that can capture and explain management in spite of its inherently messy, fluctuating, and accidental nature" (Raelin, 2009: 402).

Though faculty and administrators frequently extol the virtues of critical thinking, in practice many business courses deliver "immediate use knowledge" that involves little critical thinking (Bunch, 2020). Despite some professors' willingness to adopt experimental classroom methods, "the unfortunate truth is that too often most faculty members teach the way that they were taught: through lectures or other similar approaches" (Brown, Arbaugh, Hrivnak, & Kenworthy, 2013: 244). Commentators have used the metaphor "spoon-feeding" to describe the traditional model of management education that entails transferring information—seen as totalizing and permanent rather than provisional and contested—from the mind of the knower to the mind of the user (Dehler & Welsh, 2014; Raelin, 2009). "Mainstream teaching approaches are based on a simplistic division of power," noted Vince (2010: S26), "the teacher knows, the student does not; the teacher speaks, the student listens." Data on student learning and engagement have lent some credence to this rather bleak picture. Analyzing data from 2,000 U.S. colleges and universities, Arum and Roksa (2011) reported that 36% of students experienced no significant gains in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and written communication over four years of college, with business majors specifically ranking near the bottom. Studies have found business majors to be the least likely to express a strong interest in the work they do in college (Dugan & Kalka, 2014), to report the lowest level of perceived support from faculty (Busteed, 2014), and to spend fewer hours preparing for class than any other major (Bunch, 2020).

The critiques of management research and teaching have been accompanied by an array of voices proposing new avenues out of the discipline's traditional comfort zones. Suggestions for expanding the meaning of scholarly expertise have concentrated on what might change at the collective level. Examples include building a new pluralist conceptualization of scholarly impact (Aguinis et al., 2019; Aguinis, Shapiro, Antonacopoulou, & Cummings, 2014), increasing the number of outlets considered "A" journals (Rasheed & Priem, 2020), and broadening the range of topics, theories, and methods considered legitimate by professional associations, journals, and institutional reward structures (Schwarz, Cummings, & Cummings, 2017). There have also been calls for collectively reimagining expertise within the teaching realm. For example, Samuelson (2006) explained why B-Schools should adopt a new definition of "rigor" that elevates questioning and critical thinking above finding the right answer. Aimed at promoting the capacity to think far outside the gate, "the new rigor would be characterized by a commitment to inquiry, by the opportunity to challenge key assumptions of the MBA canon, and by teaching students how to effectively voice personal and institutional values" (Samuelson, 2006: 356).

Most discussions of new possibilities in management teaching, however, have focused on specific tactics that individual teachers might adopt. Newly proposed pedagogies often stand in stark contrast to the traditional model privileging analytic thought and standardized delivery. Lamenting how discourse in management studies disables critical thought and cripples imagination, for example, Saggurthi and Thakur (2016: 181) advocated intentional cultivation of "negative capability," by which they meant the ability to stay in the realm of not knowing:

> to delight in doubt and revel in uncertainty without feeling compelled to rationalize half-knowledge or to reach for facts and, in a state of diligent indolence and passive receptivity, move toward a knowing with the power of one's imagination, sensations, and intuition.

Berkovich (2014) detailed eight themes that should guide leadership development facilitators: self-exposure, open-mindedness, empathy, care, respect, critical thinking, contact, and mutuality. In a similar vein, Petriglieri and Petriglieri (2010) and Petriglieri, Wood, and Petriglieri (2011) envisioned personalizing management education to enhance students' understanding of their own identities. Observing that business school classrooms rarely encourage creative thinking, and noting that the traditional "reliance on textbooks and PowerPoint lectures gives students little opportunity to think on their own," Baker and Baker (2012: 711) looked to arts schools and liberal arts colleges to recommend specific pedagogies for developing creativity. Glen, Suciu, and Baughn (2014) agreed that business schools must help students develop the exploratory skills to address messy, ill-structured situations, and consequently they advocated teaching design thinking. Priem (2018) has shared elements of the approach he designed specifically to promote critical thinking in strategy courses.

Given the consistency of critiques that management research and teaching too narrowly emphasize

analytic thinking in the context of sanitized problem domains, and given the wealth of actionable ideas about how to foster critical thinking in the classroom, an uncomfortable question emerges: why has seemingly little changed in decades? Perhaps there is something to Bennis and O'Toole's (2005: 99) contention that we simply like it this way. The scientific model, they opined, "satisfies the egos of the professoriat" while making life easier on scholars by saving them the difficulty of forging "insight into complex social and human factors" facing managers. With regard to scholarship, the ever-increasing pressure to publish in elite journals incentivizes focused, conventional research (Aguinis et al., 2020). With regard to teaching, perhaps Priem (2018) is correct in underscoring how professors are burdened with myriad responsibilities that draw time away from the classroom. Partly at play may be the tendency to approach students as consumers to satisfy rather than learners to challenge (Bunch, 2020). Several commentators have suggested that the need to reduce anxiety in the classroom draws professors toward traditional teaching approaches. For example, Raab (1997: 167) contended that "being an expert in knowing is attractive for teachers because it reduces their anxiety about not knowing," while Vince (2010: S30) agreed that "in the classroom, the anxieties of tutors discourage risks." Raelin (2009: 408) elaborated on this theme, suggesting that "teachers collude in allaying learner anxiety by structuring the curriculum to minimize unexpected or anxiety-provoking occurrences and by controlling the class to prevent destabilizing dynamics." In other words, the current way of doing things comforts students, and that comforts us.

The persistence of the status quo likely has something to do with each of these explanations. This essay offers additional insight that is not incompatible with any of the above. I contend that subject–object fusion in the context of the professor–expertise relationship limits our capacity to change. If it is the case that I do not so much *have* my expertise as I *am* my expertise, then I put myself in danger if I expose my expertise to risk. Thus, I suggest that many of us "genuine imposters" (Tourish, 2020: 99) are in genuine predicaments that warrant a degree of empathy. The meaning-making structures in which we are embedded may restrict our capacity to make the recommended scholarly and pedagogical adjustments, no matter how much we desire to make them. We have seen that a long line of critiques describes with notable consistency the meaning of *expertise* constructed in the management discipline. We might consider as well the ways in which that constructed reality in turn limits the options available to professors. This essay explores how individual meaning-making struc tures interact with the environmental demands of academia to build and sustain collective disciplinary commitments to traditional ways of knowing and teaching. We are limited by the commitments to expertise we have ourselves enacted. Many professors feel stuck; this essay outlines a path toward getting unstuck. Single-loop learning is not the answer, because smart strategies and techniques are only as valuable as users' capacity to enact them. Instead, this essay encourages professors to leverage a double-loop approach that interrogates key assumptions and helps them redefine the relationship between what they experience as subject and object.

CONSTRUCTIVE-DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY AND ACADEMIC LIFE

Kegan (1980: 373) coined the term constructive-developmental theory to reference "the study of the *development* of our *construing* or meaning-making activity." Constructive-developmental theory examines how we use meaning-making systems to construct our experiences and how those systems develop over time (McCauley, Drath, Palus, O'Connor, & Baker, 2006). Meaning-making systems consist of principles, beliefs, thinking patterns, and assumptions that regulate the way we assign meaning to ourselves and the surrounding world (Valcea, Hamdani, Buckley, & Novicevic, 2011). Constructive-developmental theory identifies patterns in how we use meaning-making systems to construct reality and categorizes these patterns into stages. We are subject to the meaning-making capacity of the stage within which we operate. In other words, the stage itself cannot be reflected upon, because it is the regulative means by which we engage in reflection (McCauley et al., 2006).

Our social environment may confirm and support our current way of knowing, or it may disconfirm and challenge it. Developmental movement from one stage to the next is driven by challenges that reveal the limitations of the existing meaning-making stage (McCauley et al., 2006). The presence of revealed limitations is necessary to promote vertical growth in meaning-making capacity, but it is not always sufficient. When the complexity of the demands upon us overwhelms our capacity to process and meet those demands, we often double down on our current way of knowing and seek relief in horizontal rather than vertical growth. That is, we expand knowledge and skills that seem like solutions according to the

epistemological perspective in which we are embedded. Vertical growth is facilitated not only by the presence of revealed limitations in our current way of making meaning but by our capacity to recognize those limitations and to understand how to go about differentiating from our default assumptions such that we can see them rather than merely see through them. This capacity to recognize our limitations and to understand how to transcend them is developmental intelligence. Progression from one developmental stage to the next occurs as we manage to differentiate ourselves from thinking patterns that we were previously subject to and instead begin to hold those thinking patterns as objects over which we exercise a degree of choice and control. Thus, movement from one stage to the next involves subject–object separation, or moving beliefs from the subjective realm to the objective realm. Evolutionary activity "involves the very creating of the object (a process of differentiation) as well as our relating to it (a process of integration)" resulting in "successive triumphs of 'relationship to' rather than 'embeddedness in'" (Kegan, 1982: 77).

Research has indicated that developmental stage correlates with effectiveness in a variety of contexts. Kuhnert and Lewis (1987) proposed that individuals at higher stages of development are better situated to enact transformational leadership styles, while Voronov and Yorks (2015) theorized that higher-stage knowers are better able to apprehend institutional contradictions. Jones (2018) found that philanthropists at higher meaning-making stages have more complex, evolving, and expansive belief structures related to giving and empathy. Harris and Kuhnert (2008) and Strang and Kuhnert (2009) found positive relationships between developmental level and leader performance as measured by 360-degree feedback. Analyzing 21 top executives, Eigel and Kuhnert (2005) concluded that leaders at higher developmental stages respond to life's dilemmas with greater maturity, cognitive complexity, and overall effectiveness. Thus, while this essay is the first to consider the relationship between developmental stage and effectiveness in the professor role, research in nonacademic contexts supports the general expectation that more developed meaning-making structures should be useful to professors.

Among constructive-developmental theorists, Kegan (1982, 1994) is unique in drawing a clear distinction between the structure of an individual's meaning-making system and the contents of that system. The developmental stages proposed by Kegan are a set of principles that organize *how* we think, feel, and relate, rather than descriptions of *what* we think and feel (Helsing & Howell, 2014). This means that professors at two different developmental stages may share the same improvement goal—for example, getting better at making space for students to speak—and may even manifest similar behavioral responses to that goal, and yet they may be confronting two entirely different challenges. What is keeping the one professor stuck in place is different than what is holding the other professor back, because they are embedded in different meaning-making structures that limit them in different ways.

The four stages of adult development proposed by Kegan (1982) and developed further in subsequent decades (e.g., Kegan, 1994; Kegan & Lahey, 2009) are imperial, socialized, self-authoring, and self-transforming. Table 1 summarizes the defining features of each stage. Research has indicated that nearly 90% of the adult population operates at the socialized stage or higher and that only 1% operates at the self-transforming stage (Kegan, Lahey, Miller, Fleming, & Helsing, 2016: 76). The vast majority of professors, therefore, are stably embedded in the socialized or self-authoring stage or are partially embedded in one of these two stages and in the process of transitioning to the next stage. Accordingly, this paper focuses on the implications of operating in academia with a socialized mind and with a self-authoring mind.

The Socialized Professor

Alan is an assistant professor in his third year on the tenure track at a large midwestern U.S. B-school. (Alan is also a literary device and not a real person.) Since earning his PhD three years ago, Alan has felt the expectations on him ratchet up. That "Dr." title before his last name has raised the stakes on how devastating it would be to feel unworthy of others' approval. Each summer, as the Academy of Management annual meeting approaches, Alan carefully assesses the strength of his answer to the question he knows acquaintances will raise at social gatherings, paper sessions, and hotel lobby encounters: "So, how is your research coming along?" It is important to him to live up to the expectations of his mentors and peers. It is not that Alan suffers from low self-esteem. His confidence is generally fine. It is just that now he seems to be tasked with serving quite a few gods, and it requires his constant attention to serve them all well. He aims to align his teaching with that of departmental colleagues without coming across as unoriginal. His goal is to generate course GPA averages and

TABLE 1
Four Stages of Adult Development

Stage	Imperial	Socialized	Self-Authoring	Self-Transforming
Underlying subject–object structure	S: subject to needs, interests, wishes O: hold as object impulses, perceptions	S: subject to the social surround; to the expectations of others O: hold as object needs, interests, wishes	S: subject to self-authored identity; to the administration of the self-system O: hold as object the social surround; the expectations of others	S: subject to inter-independence; to the coexistence and comingling of distinct identities O: hold as object self-authored identity; the administration of the self-system
Percentage of the adult population at this stage[a]	8	50	41	1
Developmental growth from this stage to the next entails...	Differentiating from embeddedness in needs, interests, wishes	Differentiating from embeddedness in the social surround	Differentiating from embeddedness in one's self-authored identity	

Note: Adapted from Kegan (1982) and Kegan et al. (2016).
[a] Distribution of stages across the adult population averages the findings of the two studies described in Kegan et al., (2016: 76). The two studies are Kegan (1994) and Torbert (1987).

teaching evaluation results that approximate those of the other management professors. Alan generally delivers to students what they seem to want, which he discerns to be a great deal of structure and predictability when it comes to overall course design, in-class pedagogy, and grading frameworks. Research and writing evoke both excitement and dread for Alan. Building a respected academic identity means a great deal to him, but he absolutely hates writing. He puts off writing until he has large chunks of time to devote to the process, but the large chunks of time rarely materialize. Alan knows writing would be less excruciating if he did not obsess over the placement of every word in every sentence in every paragraph, but he cannot seem to do anything other than labor ploddingly through his papers. He needs his work to be special because he feels like an outsider who must impress the insiders. It seems to Alan as though they all know each other—the editors, the reviewers, the intellectuals milling about Academy of Management paper sessions—while he is a stranger who has yet to produce work that makes him worthy of being known.

Alan makes meaning of his world at the socialized stage of development, as do roughly half of adults (Kegan et al., 2016: 76). Alan is subject to—identified with, tied to, embedded in—his social surround. The meaning of *subject* is usefully juxtaposed with the meaning of *object*. We hold as object those elements of our knowing that we can take control of, reflect on, handle, look at, or relate to each other. That which we know as object is not the whole of us; it is distinct enough from us that we can do something with it. As Kegan (1994: 32) elaborated, "we *have* object; we *are* subject. We cannot be responsible for, in control of, or reflect upon that which is subject. Subject is immediate; object is mediate. Subject is ultimate or absolute; object is relative." It is not that Alan merely is influenced by his social surround. Rather, when it comes to how Alan makes meaning of himself and the world he inhabits, there really is no distinction between self and the approval or disapproval of others. Alan's self *is* the approving or disapproving social surround. His self embodies a plurality of voices—parents, dissertation advisor, mentors, grad school peers, editors, reviewers, departmental colleagues, and students. There is no Alan independent of the context of this multitude of voices. The realities he constructs are never solely his own; the other voices are in there from the start (Kegan, 1982: 95–96).

Given his circumstances, Alan's commitment to expertise makes sense—literally. Consider the stakes. For the socialized professor, it is an existential threat to be experienced by others as less than fully competent, as not knowing exactly what to do, as being unworthy of high regard. A disapproved Alan is a self without meaning, which is nonsensical. Alan's commitment to expertise—or, more precisely, to being experienced by others as expert—enacts a sensical

reality. It makes sense. On practical as well as meaning-making grounds, of course, developing the capacity to be experienced by others as expert is highly functional. It is the price of admission for being a professor, and it must be paid. But when being experienced by others as expert is the whole of us rather than a part of us, is immediate rather than mediate, is ultimate rather than relative—when subject and object are fused in these ways—then being experienced by others as expert has the potential to be dysfunctional as well as functional. In a number of ways, it holds us hostage. When being perceived by others as less than fully competent jeopardizes our very self—when that much is on the table—rational responses are risk aversion, preference for familiar and predictable problem domains, and desire for control. In the scholarly role, these responses may take the following forms:

- putting off writing until the schedule is cleared and "the time is right";
- writing excruciatingly slowly; experiencing anxiety and dread while writing;
- writing in a style that is abstruse and jargon-laden;
- starting research projects without following through and finishing;
- staying within familiar, narrow problem domains that feel safe; and
- having difficulty receiving referee and editor feedback during the review process.

In the teaching role, these responses may take the following forms:

- avoiding classroom topics and questions for which there are no easy answers;
- speaking a lot and filling silences quickly;
- having difficulty receiving and engaging student feedback about course weaknesses;
- designing predictable class sessions; discomfort with improvising;
- being dependent on lectures and slides; and
- feeling discomfort acknowledging the limits of one's competence.

Both outside and inside the classroom, management professors confront an array of pressures to excel and to know in ways that meet the approval of the social surround. We face "an array of social approval pressures to secure survival benefits, such as reputation and career success," and we "strive to create a meaningful social identity around being an 'academic researcher,' which is a peer-evaluated and community-corroborated outcome" (Schwarz et al., 2017: 73, 74). Common expectations are valued in part because "the hallmark of effective knowledge refinement and exploitation is a tight network among researchers" (March, 2005: 8). Isolation from disciplinary networks generates feelings of insecurity and fear of judgment (Belkhir et al., 2019), leading many scholars to "become overly concerned with how relevant others, such as journal editors and referees, judge their work" (Schwarz et al., 2017: 72). This overconcern is a symptom of subject–object fusion, where judgment of work (object) is judgment of me (subject). For many professors, the pressures felt to publish are tied to the expectations of others. In a large survey of management professors, respondents showed strong agreement when asked to indicate on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) the extent to which they agreed with the sentence stem, "I feel pressure to publish . . .," completed with the following clauses: "from colleagues at my university" (tenure-track $M = 4.15$; tenured $M = 3.73$) and "from colleagues at other universities" (tenure-track $M = 4.03$; tenured $M = 3.47$) (Miller et al., 2011: 432). We publish not only to obtain tenure but to win the esteem of our peers. There is a sense in which our research and writing make us real not only to ourselves but also "in the mirror which is our colleagues' view of us" (Grey & Sinclair, 2006: 449). Academics sometimes adopt abstruse, jargon-laden styles of speaking and writing "so as to show that we are, after all, still serious scholars" (Grey & Sinclair, 2006: 445). Relating a vignette at a conference paper session in which the presenter cites obscure author after obscure author and drones on pretentiously, audience members Grey and Sinclair (2006: 444) dryly assess the scene: "What is the point of this, I wonder, what are you really trying to say? And then I realize what the speaker is saying. He is saying that he has read a great deal more than anyone else."

Impressing others is a concern in the classroom, as well. "I started [teaching] with undergrad students and I was really, really nervous," shared one veteran management professor, "so nervous I couldn't even make eye contact with my students . . .. I knew it was a fiasco, and I was embarrassed by it" (Sandhu et al., 2019: 169). A logical way to relieve anxiety is to plan, prepare, and make the classroom a predictable place. "I was a very anxious teacher," shared another management professor, "I really worried about filling the time, and about holding people's attention. So, I am pretty much a scripted teacher" (Sandhu

et al., 2019: 172). Structure and control protect us from the anxiety of underperforming our expert role:

> as teachers [we] develop defences against this anxiety, because we are not going to let ourselves get in that pickle again! We call this "planning and preparation"; the extent to which it serves as a defence against anxiety (both ours and theirs) is not necessarily something of which we are consciously aware. (Raab, 1997: 168)

Many of us find improvising for an audience daunting because it requires us to relax our hold on the protective shield of "knowing." Explaining how she and her coauthors presented a paper to an audience by enacting a play, a management professor remarked that "it was so creative, and brave, and totally terrifying" (Sandhu et al., 2019: 171).

The pressures on professors to "be expert" incline socialized minds toward the types of scholarly and teaching practices described in critiques of management research and education. These practices stand in stark contrast to those suggested by commentators interested in fostering more heterogenous, creative, and relevant research and promoting critical thinking, creativity, and questioning in classrooms. It is not surprising that there is alignment between the discipline's collective construction of expertise and the ways of being expert that most make sense for the socialized professor. This essay earlier asked why existing ways of knowing are so resistant to change, despite a long line of critiques and wealth of proposals for alternatives. One plausible answer is that through the lens of constructive-developmental theory, current ways of doing things *make sense* for many of us. They are functional in that they are effective means for socialized professors to avoid being experienced by others as unworthy. Risk aversion, predictability, and control are the self-protective play.

While enacting expertise in traditional ways may make sense for socialized professors, the meaning-making effectiveness of the socialized mind itself has real limitations. For Alan, as for many of us, listening to so many voices can become exhausting. Worse yet, as expectations in Alan's various social surrounds grow and complexify, they more frequently come into conflict with one another. For example, Alan hears from his department ambiguous messages about how he should allocate his time between scholarship, teaching, and service. Within the scholar role, he feels murky about where he stands. Were this referee's comments meant to be encouraging or just polite? Should he interpret that referee's comments as scalding or simply direct? How does a third-authorship weigh in relation to a first-authorship? How much and where are his graduate school peers publishing? Within the teaching role, he receives different signals from students and from colleagues about how conservative he should remain versus how experimental he should push himself to be. Everything he does seems to please some students while displeasing others. In the broader context of Alan's life, family and community expectations further stretch him. He increasingly feels that different contexts want different Alans, and he is getting torn to pieces trying to deliver. In certain situations, he feels he is expected to be polite and deferential, in other situations dominant and assertive. Being experienced as worthy in every way and by everybody becomes impossible. Choices must be made. However, because there is no Alan independent of his various social surrounds, there is no Alan before which conflicts between different social surrounds can be brought. This is the fundamental limitation of the socialized mind (Kegan, 1982). The challenge before him is to develop the capacity to differentiate from his social surround such that there is a consistent self before which conflicts can be brought, and within which decisions can be made, in his increasingly complex world.

The Self-Authoring Professor

Gabriela is preparing to move from Chile to Spain. (Like Alan, Gabriela too is a literary device.) She earned tenure at a Chilean B-School two years ago, then she leveraged her scholarly productivity to secure a job at an elite university in Barcelona. As she packs up her office, Gabriela reflects on how she has grown professionally since moving into that same space nine years prior. She is now more adept in the various roles her career entails. She sequences research projects strategically and is effective at developing networks of coauthors. Gabriela is efficient at prepping classes and managing courses. She has developed her own distinct presence in the classroom—her own teaching brand—and is notably confident delivering lectures and orchestrating discussions. She accepts the inevitability of some students disliking her courses, and that does not bother her. She reflects on how productive she is now that she spends little time trying to figure out what other people want of her. Gabriela sometimes wonders, though, if her current pace is sustainable. She is a productive researcher, but not an efficient one. She labors at writing, obsessing as she does over sentence structure, phrasing, and the quality of her work in general. She edits and re-edits

and re-edits again. She eventually gets the work out, but she often procrastinates and then exhausts herself catching back up. Gabriela feels like she can never say “no” to serving on a panel, chairing a symposium, joining an ad hoc committee, and so on, not because she worries about disappointing the asker but because she thinks she can and should be able to handle the requests.

Gabriela makes meaning of her world at the self-authoring stage of development. Roughly 40% of adults operate at this stage (Kegan et al., 2016: 76). She holds as object that which Alan is subject to. The expectations of others matter to Gabriela, but she is not embedded in mutuality. There is a self there that is differentiated from its social surround. As she has moved from “I *am* my relationships” to “I *have* relationships,” a Gabriela has emerged who is doing this having (Kegan, 1982: 100). In differentiating self from others, Gabriela in turn integrates others into a system she now regulates. Whereas pieces of Alan are owned by the various shared contexts he inhabits, Gabriela owns and administers her full self. Gabriela’s autonomy enables her to evaluate the expectations of others and equips her to withstand conflict (Helsing & Howell, 2014). As a scholar, she follows her own compass in deciding what topics to engage and what peer networks to cultivate. As an instructor, she has gained separation from the expectations of both students and departmental colleagues, and now she has access to her own evaluative basis for determining what and how she should teach. Gabriela’s autonomy, in short, is beneficial in numerous work situations.

Self-authorship is not without limitations. While Gabriela holds as object that which Alan is subject to, she in turn is embedded in—identified with, tied to, fused with—her self-authored operating system. Gabriela’s self *is* the administration of the system she has authored. The nature of this form of embeddedness makes Gabriela’s relationship with expertise a tricky, problematic affair. Commitment to expertise makes sense for self-authoring Gabriela—literally, as was the case for socialized Alan. The *way* that expertise makes sense differs, however, between the socialized and the self-authoring professor. For the socialized professor, the disapproval of others poses an existential threat. For the self-authoring professor, disruption to the smooth functioning of the self-system is an existential threat. A Gabriela unable to regulate her life is a self without meaning, which is nonsensical. Gabriela’s commitment to expertise—or, more precisely, her commitment to expertly administering her world—enacts a sensical reality. It makes sense. As is the case with Alan, Gabriela’s commitment to expertise has clear practical value. Expertise is the foundation for operating competently as a professor. However, when running smoothly and autonomously is the whole of us rather than a part of us, is immediate rather than mediate, and is ultimate rather than relative, when subject and object are fused in these ways, then running smoothly and autonomously has the potential to be debilitating as well as enabling. For Alan, expertise is a lifeline in a sea of expectations; for Gabriela, expertise is more of an intoxicant, and as is the case with many intoxicants, it can become addictive. Being “subject-to” one’s own self-authored system assumes slightly different forms depending on the self that is being authored, but the ultimacy of embeddedness promotes the following types of logics: “not only do I want to be right, but I can never be not right”; “not only do I want to be brilliant, but I can never be not the most brilliant”; “not only do I want to be distinct, but I can never be not entirely unique”, and so forth. These sorts of ultimacies, in which less-than-perfection is unthinkable, have the potential to foster risk aversion, a preference for familiar problem domains, and a need for control, which, as already established, are precisely the self-protective responses generated by socialized meaning-making structures in academic environments.

Immense pressures are associated with self-authoring an expert identity. In a study with over 400 respondents, 62.5% strongly agreed and another 29.2% agreed with the statement, “I feel pressure to publish articles in peer-reviewed journals from myself” (Miller et al., 2011: 428). One respondent elaborated, “I feel massive pressure to publish in peer-reviewed journals, but almost all of the pressure I generate myself,” while another described the pressure as “tremendous, sometimes crippling” (Miller et al., 2011: 428, 431). Given the unforgiving severity of self-imposed standards, it is no wonder one management professor explained, “I hate writing. Hate it, hate it, absolutely hate it. I find writing really hard. It’s like pulling teeth. I’m a terrible starter. It’s probably my biggest failing as an academic” (Sandhu et al., 2019: 170). Performance anxiety can be paralyzing when failure is unthinkable. Being expert matters for obtaining tenure and other measures of professional success, but for self-authoring professors, the stakes are higher even than that. “We write,” reflected Grey and Sinclair (2006: 449), “because it has become our way of being, our way of reassuring ourselves about our own significance. I’m cited, therefore I am!” And if we do not write, echoed Kiriakos and Tienari

(2018: 270), "well, we don't really exist." Subject and object are fused. The self-authoring professor *is* the expert functioning of their own teaching and writing system. To risk the system is to risk the self.

Both socialized and self-authoring frameworks, then, inform similar teaching and scholarly behaviors that amount to keeping the car on familiar roads and maintaining a tight hold of the wheel. Substantial individual-level meaning-making energy, it seems, sustains traditional disciplinary ways of knowing and teaching. The profile of business professors elaborated in the literature may be a study in what it looks like to need to be experienced by others as expert (the socialized profile) or what it looks like to need to experience one's self as the expert operator of one's own clean machine (the self-authoring profile). From the perspective of both socialized and self-authoring minds, it makes self-constructive and self-protective sense to avoid messy, ill-defined, and ambiguous problem domains (Bennis & O'Toole, 2005; Chia & Holt, 2008; Schon, 1983), confine research to tight disciplinary comfort zones and write "safe, narrow" papers (Harley, 2019: 288), commit to formal analytic thinking (Hay & Samra-Fredericks, 2019; Leavitt, 1989), feature lecturing (Brown et al., 2013), parse management practices into detached, predictable, and teachable categories (Raelin, 2009), deliver immediate-use knowledge (Bunch, 2020), and approach teaching as a process in which the knower spoon-feeds the user (Dehler & Welsh, 2014). Conversely, proposals for venturing out of traditional comfort zones threaten the expert foundations upon which both socialized and self-authoring professors build meaning. Pursuing novel research topics (Corbett et al., 2014), employing nontraditional research methods (Vogel, Hattke, & Petersen, 2017), writing more accessibly (Grey & Sinclair, 2006), redefining rigor as effective questioning rather than having the right answer (Samuelson, 2006), engaging messy, ill-structured problems (Glen et al., 2014), staying in the realm of not knowing (Saggurthi & Thakur, 2016), featuring self-exposure and mutuality in a more personalized classroom (Berkovich, 2014; Petriglieri & Petriglieri, 2010; Petriglieri et al., 2011), and stepping away from the podium (Baker & Baker, 2012) are not merely risky endeavors but deep threats to meanings of self that are made within both socialized and self-authoring structures. They are endeavors we are unlikely to undertake until object (expertise) separates from subject (self).

Although socialized and self-authoring frameworks promote similar self-constructive and self-protective behaviors in academic roles, professors at the two stages desirous of changing those defaults confront different challenges. They are stuck in different ways because they experience different forms of subject–object fusion. Evolutionary stages in constructive-developmental theory are about process rather than content—about *how* we know rather than *what* we know. Socialized and self-authoring professors gravitate toward similar expert behaviors, but those behaviors make sense of self and others in different ways. For Alan, making meaning in more expansive, more objective, and more complex ways entails differentiating from his social surround such that there is a consistent self within which decisions can be made. For Gabriela, on the other hand, developmental growth entails a different form of subject–object separation; it entails differentiating from her own self-authored system such that she gains perspective on the system's operational constraints. This essay next explores how Alan and Gabriela might go about differentiating from embeddedness in these ways.

DEVELOPING DEVELOPMENTAL INTELLIGENCE

The core theoretical contribution of this essay is re-diagnosing the management discipline's enduring commitment to excessively safe and narrow enactments of expertise, and in proposing double-loop learning possibilities where a single-loop approach has prevailed. I have argued that subject–object fusion in the context of the professor–expertise relationship makes it difficult for us to gain perspective on and control over the ways we enact expert behavior. Subject–object fusion takes on different forms at different developmental stages; socialized and self-authoring professors both see *through* expertise, but in different ways. I have suggested that the self-authoring framework better equips professors to engage scholar and educator roles than does the socialized framework, but commitment to expertise makes sense within both frameworks in ways that tend to lock professors into traditional ways of knowing and teaching. I now turn to elaborating this essay's practical contribution, which is introducing an actionable way to promote double-loop learning and subject-object separation.

The ITC methodology is a means for professors to move expertise from the subjective to the objective realm. It is a tool for us to develop our developmental intelligence, or our capacity to expand the structures within which we organize and make sense of our experiences. The ITC process is explained in detail by

Kegan and Lahey in their 2009 book *Immunity to Change*. Informative article-length overviews of the ITC process are also available in Kegan and Lahey (2001b) and Helsing (2018). The ITC methodology helps users identify and name deep features of their meaning-making structures (Helsing, 2018) and leverage those insights to activate a qualitative shift in how they "understand themselves and their world and the relationship between the two" (Helsing, Howell, Kegan, & Lahey, 2008: 443). ITC is a way to challenge and grow meaning-making structures without passively waiting for life experience to do the job. The process enables the participant to diagnose how their system makes meaning and then interrogate the core assumptions on which the system rests. In treating as object the assumptions to which one was previously subject, the ITC methodology facilitates differentiation from embeddedness and transition toward the next developmental stage. Let us return to Alan and Gabriela to elaborate a textured explanation of this process.

Do I Contradict Myself?

"Very well then I contradict myself," observed Walt Whitman (1855/1973: 88); "I am large. I contain multitudes." As useful as multitudes can be, socialized and self-authoring minds typically are not comfortable containing them. For most of us, internal contradictions are evidence that our meaning-making apparatus is struggling to organize and make sense of our experiences. Contradictions are thus fertile grounds to explore if we want to develop a better understanding of what is keeping us stuck. Accordingly, the ITC methodology begins by asking participants to identify a specific way in which they would like to close a gap between how they currently are and how they want to be. Table 2 contains ITC diagnoses for both Alan and Gabriela. Alan's improvement goal, articulated in column 1, is to get better at holding his silence in the classroom when a question or an issue is on the floor. He wants to be able to keep his nerve during those painful moments when students refuse to take up the conversation. Alan's behavior contradicts his intentions. As column 2 indicates, he typically steps quickly into the void and ends the silence either by asking a follow-up question or answering the question on the floor himself, thus letting the students off the hook for their own learning.

Column 3 asks Alan to articulate the worry—the sick feeling—he imagines he might experience if he were *not* to enact his column-2 behaviors. Alan anticipates that if he does not end the silence, he will feel awkward and will feel that the audience thinks he does not know what he is doing. In column 4, Alan infers protective commitments that arise in response to his column-3 worries. Alan's column-4 articulations are not necessarily commitments that he knows he has or that he wants; rather, they are hidden commitments that have been playing a role in his life whether he knows it or not. Alan deduces that he is committed to never looking awkward and to never putting himself in a situation where others think he does not know what he is doing. Columns 3 and 4 afford us a view of Alan's meaning-making system. In his worries and hidden commitments, we see the socialized preoccupation with not drawing the disapproval of others. When we consider columns 1 through 4 together, we see the structural basis of Alan's dilemma. His column-4 hidden commitment to never look awkward or in over his head is in direct competition with his column-1 stated commitment to hold his nerve and sit with silences. Alan is in the throes of competing commitments, pulled with equal force in opposite directions, with the result that he goes nowhere. He is stuck. Finally, we see in the ITC diagnosis how expertise interacts with meaning-making stage to simultaneously "make sense" while limiting Alan's teaching capacity. In column 2, we see Alan having expertise and deploying it to solve his column-3 and column-4 problems. He fills the silence, asks further well-informed questions, answers the questions on the floor, and generally shows the audience that he knows his stuff. He enacts in those moments a sensical Alan, given his socialized perspective. But in making sense this way, he ensures that he cannot make progress on his column-1 improvement goal. He *has* his expertise—and he uses is to serve columns 3 and 4—but his expertise also *has him* because his reliance on it impedes his development. This is Alan's predicament.

Gabriela faces a different predicament. Her column-1 improvement goal is to get better at completing scholarly manuscripts without procrastinating and laboring. Ultimately, she does produce research, but her process feels painstaking, inefficient, and exhausting. Column 2 explains what Gabriela's process looks like now. She often puts off writing, and when she sits down to write, she meticulously selects words, crafts sentences, edits, and re-edits again. Her pace is painfully slow. She allows herself to get distracted to avoid writing, busying herself instead with e-mails, grading, or going on the internet. When Gabriela imagines herself doing the opposite of these things—that is, when she imagines

TABLE 2
ITC Diagnoses for Alan and Gabriela

Column 1	Column 2	Column 3	Column 4	Column 5
What is my improvement goal?	**What am I doing instead?**	**What are my worries if I do *the opposite* of what I am doing instead?**	**What are my hidden competing commitments?**	**What are my underlying assumptions?**
Alan: I want to get better at sitting with silence in the classroom when a question or issue is on the floor.	***Alan:*** After I pose a question or present an issue, if students do not respond, I end the tension by speaking and filling the void. Sometimes I fill the void by asking a follow-up question; sometimes I sort of answer the question that was hanging out there.	***Alan:*** I worry I will feel awkward and uncomfortable. I worry the whole room will sense my awkwardness. I worry the audience will think I do not know what I am doing, that I do not know how to run a smooth class.	***Alan:*** I am committed to never looking awkward. I am committed to never allowing others to see my discomfort. I am committed to never putting myself in a situation where others think I do not know what I am doing and think I am in over my head.	***Alan:*** I assume I will look as awkward to others as I feel. I assume others can see what I feel. I assume others are quick to conclude that I do not know what I am doing. I assume that if I feel awkward and in over my head, that will be devastating for me.
Gabriela: I want to get better at completing scholarly manuscripts that I begin, without procrastinating and laboring so much.	***Gabriela:*** I often procrastinate and put off writing. I spend lots of time crafting individual sentences to perfection. I obsess over sentence structure, phrasing, and the quality of my work in general. I edit and re-edit and re-edit again. My pace is extremely slow. When I should be writing, I distract myself putting out work fires (e-mails, grading, class prep), or I allow myself to get distracted by going on Facebook, checking my investments, scoping recipes, etc.	***Gabriela:*** I worry the final product will not be all that great, all that profound, all that special. I worry it will be “okay,” mundane, normal work. I do not think I worry it will be terrible but rather that it will be “just okay.”	***Gabriela:*** I am committed to never producing something that is not profound, that is not special, that is just okay. I am committed to never producing work that disappoints me. I am committed to avoiding situations that might end up with me feeling like I have an average mind.	***Gabriela:*** I assume that there is a good chance that what I have to say in my papers is more mundane—is less profound—than I like to think it is. I assume that if I do judge my final product as less profound and less brilliant than I want it to be, my sense of self-worth will truly decline. And I assume this will be devastating for me, and I will not recover. I assume that everything I do must be perfect.

herself just writing and getting projects out the door more quickly—the worry she articulates in column 3 is that her work will be not all that special, not all that profound, and not all that great. As long as her work is in her head, it is perfect; when she writes it down, it has flaws. It makes her sick to think of her work being mundane, normal, or just okay. Translating her column-3 worries into column-4 hidden commitments, Gabriela sees that her system has been committed to never producing something that is not profound, that is not special, that is just okay. Her system is committed to protecting her from experiencing average-ness. In Gabriela's worries and hidden commitments, we see the self-authoring preoccupation with perfection and the smooth running of the self-system. Her column-4 hidden commitment to never produce “just okay” work is in direct competition with her column-1 stated commitment to produce work more quickly. Gabriela's hidden commitment is functional in that it protects her from

falling down and dysfunctional in that it prevents her from thriving. She holds tightly to expertise, and expertise in turn has her in its grips. Holding a too-tight relationship with expertise "makes sense" because it prevents not-being-perfect from happening, but it is a limiting way of making sense. This is Gabriela's predicament.

From Seeing through Assumptions to Seeing Them

The final column in the ITC diagnosis is column 5, which captures the core assumptions that a person must be making about the world for their column-4 hidden commitments to make sense. In a meaning-making system that is struggling to organize and process experiences, these core assumptions typically have grown too strong and too absolute. They need to be rightsized to fit the person's current reality more appropriately. Returning to Alan's ITC diagnosis, we see that his meaning-making system surrounding his goal of holding silence rests upon core assumptions that he will look as awkward to others as he feels, that others are quick to conclude that he does not know what he is doing, and that it will be devastating for him if he feels awkward. Before he engaged the ITC process, these assumptions were invisible to Alan; he saw *through* them—meaning they shaped what he saw—but he did not see them (Kegan & Lahey, 2001a). The diagnosis brings them before his eyes, making them objects on which he might work. Gabriela, too, gains distance from her core assumptions when writing them down for the first time in column 5. Gabriela's meaning-making system in relation to the improvement goal of writing efficiently is built upon core assumptions that what she really has to say is more mundane than she likes to think it is, that her self-worth will be devastated if she does judge her work to be not brilliant, and that everything she does must be perfect.

The five-column diagnosis enables ITC participants to understand how their system makes meaning and to surface previously unseen core assumptions. The next step is to leverage the diagnosis to test core assumptions driving the meaning-making apparatus. Testing entails doing something we would not normally do for the purpose of generating data about the size, prevalence, and appropriateness of our core assumptions. The best tests are relatively small and actionable. For example, Alan might create a test that has him count to 12 in his head before breaking a classroom silence, and Gabriela might create a test that has her intentionally eschew distractions and perfectionism and instead write for a timed 20 minutes. The tests enable Alan and Gabriela to generate information about core assumptions. In Alan's case, did it really feel intolerably awkward to hold silence for 12 seconds? Was feeling awkward truly devastating? For Gabriela, was the writing she produced really without value? Was it truly devastating to produce a chunk of writing that was not perfect? Alan and Gabriela might next design amped up second tests to generate more data about their assumptions. For example, Alan might extend his 12-second pause to 20 seconds, and Gabriela might attempt two 20-minute focused writing sessions with a five-minute break in between. As ITC participants calibrate their column-5 assumptions through observation and testing, the column-2 "dysfunctional" behaviors lose their self-protective value and consequently become less pronounced over time, clearing the way for the column-1 improvement goal. The column-2 behaviors are not the problem; they are merely symptoms of the problem. The problem is the disconnect between core assumptions and current realities, which causes meaning-making to malfunction in self-protective and self-limiting ways.

Confusing symptoms with problems hamstrings common approaches to change in the management education and learning literature. The standard single-loop approach identifies behaviors that need changing and then advises people to exercise the courage and resolve necessary to change them. For example, if professors use structure in the classroom to avoid the anxiety of not knowing, the solution is to develop the courage to be vulnerable (Raab, 1997). Similarly, if professors encounter difficulty writing, they should "embrace vulnerability and turn it into courage" (Kiriakos & Tienari, 2018: 272) and should resolve not to fear hostile readers (Jensen, 2017); if they feel nervous in the classroom, they should push through with hard work and tenacity (Sandhu et al., 2019); if they feel isolated from professional networks, they should "take personal charge" of finding mentors (Belkhir et al., 2019: 273). Courage and resolve are useful qualities in change efforts, but they rarely suffice. A focus on changing behaviors through force of will alone denies the power of the self-protective function those behaviors typically serve and ignores the constraints of subject–object fusion. Worse yet, the rare person who does manage to change behaviors without engaging developmental growth may find themselves as anxious, discontented, and frustrated as ever. Change efforts focused on behavioral modification rather than constructive-developmental diagnosis mistake constructed reality

for objective reality. Until one gets a handle on how they construct their reality—until they focus on *how* they know rather than *what* (they think) they know—their suffering will persist because their "objective" will continually shift. Their "objective," it turns out, is in fact subjective and thus ongoingly relative. When the lines between subject and object blur and the two fuse together, it can take a great deal of running to keep in the same place. A person internally wired to meet the expectations of their social surround or their own ever-increasing self-authored standards rarely operates perfectly enough to find contentment. In the words of one veteran professor who by all objective measures achieved substantial professional success, an academic career is "hungry, forever hungry, you can always do more ... do more, do more" (Belkhir et al., 2019: 179).

The ITC methodology promotes *learning* as Cunliffe (2002: 37) has defined it: "becoming more aware of how we constitute and maintain our 'realities' and identities." As an exercise in moving assumptions from the subjective to the objective realm, it helps us practice differentiating from that within which we are embedded. The object of developmental growth is to transcend the embeddedness of our current stage and transition to the next stage, which for socialized minds means moving to self-authoring, and for self-authoring minds means moving to self-transforming. Transitioning from one stage to the next occurs over an extended time period (Kegan, 1982). Thus, many individuals are more appropriately categorized as in-transition than in-stage. While studies have indicated that only 1% of individuals make meaning consistently at the self-transforming stage, 6–7% of people are transitioning from self-authoring to self-transforming (Kegan et al., 2016: 76). Thus, professors seeking developmental growth might reasonably aspire to differentiating from the embeddedness of the self-authoring stage enough to begin transitioning to the self-transforming stage.

Meaning-making at the self-transforming stage holds as object the operational self-system to which the self-authoring mind is subject. Professors moving toward a self-transforming mind begin to experiment with what it means to think of oneself as comprised of multiple identities rather than a single identity. They find competing perspectives interesting rather than threatening, manage to hold divergent interpretations without feeling the need to immediately reduce dissonance, are more interested in identifying problems than administering solutions, and are capable of being vulnerable with others and forging deep social connections (Kegan, 1982, 1994). The closer we approach the self-transforming stage, the greater the opportunity for us to forge a healthy relationship with expertise. Professors with expansive meaning-making capacities do not gravitate toward safe, narrow, familiar, and in-control enactments of expertise. Being expert—either in the eyes of others or in their own mind's eye—is not the whole of them. They manage to have their expertise without it having them.

Development in Community with Others

Though life periodically calls into question our current ways of making sense of everyday experiences—which Cunliffe (2002: 36) referred to as moments of being "struck" by the inadequacy of our current ways of thinking, feeling, and acting— we often respond by avoiding rather than engaging change (Hibbert, Callagher, Siedlok, Windahl, & Kim, 2019: 188). We have at our disposal various means of turning away from developmental growth. Avoidance practices, such as resigning oneself to the situation, disconnecting through substance abuse, or relocating to a new organization (Hibbert et al., 2019), can enable a person to carry on with an outworn meaning-making structure. A critical element in growing developmental intelligence, then, is inspiring and sustaining engagement with the change process.

Engagement with developmental work is best inspired and sustained in community with others and in the context of a structured methodology. Developmental communities make people accountable for sticking with the work, and human relationships "provide complementary emotional support to address a rationally demanding call to change" (Hibbert et al., 2019: 38). Professors interested in stage evolution give themselves the best chance of success if they find community with peers either inside or outside the academy. Fortunately, the criteria for effective developmental cohorts are reasonably accessible. Even small groups of three or four people, meeting virtually or in-person for an hour every week or two, are highly effective in establishing accountability, support, and inspiration.

The ITC methodology accommodates the cohort approach well.[2] Peers help one another engage the ITC process in several ways. During the initial column-building stage of the ITC process, it is useful for participants to share the content of their columns at each step and listen to the experiences of others

[2] I thank The Developmental Edge for allowing me to observe and help implement their ITC cohort model, The Developmental Sprint®.

in building their columns. Peer sharing enhances understanding for both speakers and listeners. Once participants complete their columns, they engage in observation and experimentation for one to three months. Weekly cohort meetings enable members to share what they have noticed and tested, articulate what they have learned, and collectively brainstorm additional experiments. Regular meetings keep participants accountable, decreasing the likelihood that they will slip into avoidance practices. Cohorts provide emotional support (Hibbert et al., 2019) and inspiration to push onward. The satisfaction of contributing to the growth of others helps keep participants engaged and motivated. Peer groups can stay in development together over long periods of time, tackling sequential rounds of improvement goals, associated columns, and experiments.

CONCLUSION: REJECTING THE FAUSTIAN PACT

In a recent reflection on disquiet within the discipline, Harley (2019) asked why management scholars feel that their research and teaching activities are unsatisfying or even meaningless. Harley's answers echoed concerns registered by others and chronicled in this essay: intensifying pressure to maximize both quantity and quality of research, homogenized positivist work that has no impact, safe research conducted for instrumental reasons, and a classroom context that promotes standardized delivery and pleasing the customer. It is notable that nearly all commentators, like Harley, located the sources of professors' frustrations and felt meaninglessness in the discipline-wide system. While I do not dispute the significance of system-level dynamics, the perspective offered in this essay is that when we analyze why professors feel meaningless, we might also consider how it is that they make meaning. I have argued that if we do not make meaning out of our profession from a developmentally intelligent position, then it will make meaning out of us. If we forfeit agency, we will likely find our work limited in meaning and perhaps even meaningless. It is our responsibility to take up the task of making our own meaning.

Harley (2019) called on senior academics to challenge the norms and behaviors generating frustration within the discipline. He asked them to reject the "Faustian pact" in which management scholars have traded their intellectual souls for status and remuneration. Harley hopes that senior scholars will "stop trying to conform to an idealized version of what laboratory scientists do" (p. 292), stop "perpetuating the myth of the heroic workaholic publishing machine" (p. 293), stop "boosting a flawed system" obsessed with journal lists and citation counts (p. 294), and will impress upon junior colleagues the importance of teaching (p. 294). Harley's call to action indicates that he has felt the limitations of current ways of knowing. He envisioned a form of expertise that enables professors to make meaning of themselves and their worlds in more expansive, complex ways. As Harley himself noted, however, many professors are subject to other impulses. It is common, he observed, for professors to bring attention to their publishing accomplishments, boast about the many hours they work, and impress peers with their tactics for boosting citation counts. These are embedded behaviors. These individuals are subject to the expectations of their social surrounds or subject to their own self-authored identities. They do not have the capacity to reflect on, much less take a stand against, their own embeddedness. In short, Harley asked peers to challenge that which he has made object but which they are subject to. From a constructive-developmental perspective we must ask—not only rhetorically, but actually—how could they do what Harley asked them to do? Harley proposed tactics for getting different results, but enacting those tactics is a tall order for individuals whose meaning-making structures fuse expertise and self. Harley's single-loop approach advises *what* to do; this essay's double-loop approach has suggested *how* it might be done.

In a rejoinder to Harley, Phillips (2019) explained that the system Harley lamented is intractable. Academic publishing is a winner-takes-all system, observed Phillips (2019: 307), and "status is a zero-sum game." The concentration of status "in a few individuals and a few universities necessarily leads to lower status for most members of the profession and most institutions" (Phillips, 2019: 307). This is good for the advancement of knowledge, concluded Phillips (2019: 307), although he conceded that "it is not functional at the level of an individual academic career as there are many more 'unhappy losers' than 'happy winners.'" Phillips' response to Harley is pertinent to this discussion for two reasons. First, it likely reflects the thinking of quite a few professors. Second, it underscores how one meaning-making system has difficulty hearing what a different one has to say. What we see in the Harley–Phillips exchange is not so much disagreement in *what* the two commentators know as disconnect between *how* they know. Harley's dis-embedded vantage enabled

him to reflect upon prevailing ways of knowing. For Phillips, as for many of us, there is no reflecting upon the regulation of a system that regulates him. The system ascribes meaning—the system makes sense. Winners publish, losers do not. Winners are happy, losers are unhappy. Status equals success. The embeddedness of this perspective traces to the social surround for some professors and to self-authored identity for others. Phillips regretted that the system leaves so many "unhappy losers" in its wake but ultimately concluded that nothing can be done.

The evidence of disconnect between *how* Harley and Phillips know is that Phillips acknowledged but never engaged Harley's central point that the field's "winners" as well as its "losers" are unhappy. Harley (2019: 286) clearly established that the dissatisfaction and felt meaninglessness he observed is not a function of career failure: "I hear expressions of disquiet from colleagues at all career stages: emeriti, eminent senior colleagues who are apparently at their peaks in terms of productivity and reputation." Like many of us, Phillips had difficulty making sense of Harley's "unhappy winners." Our commitment to a particular manner of expertise tends to *have us* in this way. We struggle to make meaning of "happy" and "unhappy" other than our socialized or self-authoring structures allow us to, and in the context of the profession, publishing winners are happy and publishing losers are unhappy. Thus, Phillips argued past Harley rather than with him, defending the made meanings to which most of us are subject.

Developmental intelligence makes both the winners and the losers among us a bit happier. It speaks to different predicaments. Subject–object separation affords professors different vantage points from which to construct meanings of "expertise." Even intractable systems have less power over us if we confront them as object—evaluating them and making choices about how we engage them—than if we are subject to them. For some individuals, developmental growth may result in the choice not to pursue "A" journal hits. From a dis-embedded vantage, "expertise" can take on meanings unrelated to the approval of "A" journal editors and reviewers. A multitude of meanings of expertise are available to professors who develop the capacity to differentiate from the academic social surround and from a single self-authored academic identity. Diverse ways of knowing, connecting, and earning money can inform different identities in such varied contexts as consulting, executive education, nonelite universities, and networks of nonacademics. Status, wealth, and self-actualization can be fed outside as well as inside the Academy. Hibbert et al. (2019: 197) used the term *reorienting focus* to describe this form of engagement with change in which one explores alternative possibilities and fundamentally reconfigures one's own identity. For other professors, developmental growth will confirm their choice to pursue "A" list journals but with more effective meaning-making structures. This essay has shown how developmental intelligence enables professors to calibrate core assumptions to better fit the demands of their lives. Professors might leverage the ITC methodology to become more effective and less anxious scholars and teachers. Subject–object separation positions us to better enact the rich array of pedagogical options proposed in the literature. Hibbert et al. (2019: 197) used the term *recommitting* to represent this form of engagement with change in which one accepts the challenges of a situation as it currently exists and takes responsibility for improvement within that context.

If there is a Faustian pact in management studies, I contend that professors have gained more than status and remuneration in return for trading away intellectual plurality, pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, and richer teacher–learner dynamics. I contend we have gained, as well, a specific disciplinary construction of expertise that helps us make sense of ourselves within the constraints of socialized and self-authoring developmental stages. Faust's pact, it turns out, works for him for a while before ultimately ending in his enslavement to the Devil. Our stories are a bit less dramatic than Faust's, but there is similarity in that our meaning-making settlements work for a while before ultimately constraining us in various ways. Unlike Faust, we may reject the pact at any time, leveraging developmental growth to trade back a measure of our comfort in return for more expansive, complex, and objective meaning-making capacity.

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