All for One and One for All:
How Teams Adapt to Crises

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Allen voor eén en eén voor allen:
hoe teams zich aanpassen aan crises

Thesis

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

All for one and one for all, united we stand divided we fall.

— Alexandre Dumas, The Three Musketeers

Surprises and crises can occur anytime, anywhere, and can impart acute challenges on organizations and employees. The Bhopal chemical plant disaster in 1984 challenged operational crews with a series of missed cues and errors, and killed thousands (Weick, 2010). The peril of the Ebola virus in 2014 significantly disrupted emergency medical teams in far corners of the world—for instance Australia—as they prepared for outbreaks and dealing with suspected cases (Wright, Meyer, Reay, & Staggs, 2020). Threats posed by criminals forced SWAT teams to respond to neutralize danger to bystanders and officers (Bechky & Okhuysen, 2011). The risks of fires thrust firefighting teams into reacting and making leaps of faith to put them out (Pratt, Lepisto, & Dane, 2019). The above cases and contexts for the involved teams were undoubtedly difficult and demanding. Unsurprisingly, agile teams have become the backbone of any modern dynamic organization: they are designed to successfully adapt to changing situations.

How do teams *experience* unpredictable change, and what is the role of *emotions*? How do teams *cope* and *collectively* respond to crises? These questions have been somewhat of a personal puzzle, as a professional with 17 years of experience leading teams in diverse industries and functions. My first observation is that change and unpredictability are inevitable challenges teams must deal with, whether they like it or not. The second is how can seemingly analogous teams that follow similar structures and procedures, still differ so much in how well they adapt to surprises. Over the years, I have tried many of the prescribed methods, processes, and recommendations for agility—both from academic and managerial sources—but only had partially successful results. The PhD provided the opportunity to seek more answers.

This dissertation is made up of three research papers (each being a chapter) exploring different aspects of agility in teams. The first begins by untangling the concept of team agility through an integrative review, surfacing it as a capability (input), a team performance (outcome) and the mediational adaptation mechanisms that turn inputs into outcomes. More importantly, the gap that emerges in the understanding of teams' adaptation mechanisms—especially affective—leads to the empirical portion of this dissertation. Evidently, under pressure, not all teams are created equal: they

behave, adapt, and perform differently. Thus, I conducted a two-year long comparative case study of nursing teams who suffered consecutive crises. The extensive collected dataset and grounded-theory analyses enabled two distinct studies comparing how teams differentially adapt through team emotions, affective mechanisms, and leadership. The first such study (Chapter 3) primarily aims to make theoretical contributions to the process of team adaptation. It unearths how crises are emotional upheavals that trigger a multi-level coevolution in teams, between help behaviors, and care and camaraderie. This fresh affect-based understanding of team adaptation shifts consensus away from extant structural and cognitive theories. The second such study (Chapter 4) is managerially focused by exposing implications for agile team design and leadership. It reveals how affective leaders regulate their teams' emotions toward positivity and avoid cliques and the ensuing disintegration of collective coping mechanisms during crises.

BACKGROUND

Team Agility

Uncertainty and change characterize today's organizations (Teece, Peteraf, & Leih, 2016). Such unpredictability may come from events external to

organizations (e.g., epidemics, floods, technological disruption) as well as internal (e.g., mergers, leadership change, new systems). And to cope in such environments, teams remain the primary mode of organizing work (Kozlowski, Watola, Jensen, Kim, & Botero, 2008; Rosen et al., 2011). Agile management is often seen as the panacea for teams adapting and responding to quickly shifting circumstances, and unsurprisingly the concept of team agility has enjoyed much success in the world of business (from software development, banking, operations, HR, and so forth).

Notwithstanding its importance, team agility research suffers from inconsistent conceptualizations, fragmented findings and limited theoretical integration. Some scholars consider agility an approach or method, or a behavior, while others blend attributes, performance outcomes and practices, in the same definition (Conforto, Amaral, da Silva, Di Felippo, & Kamikawachi, 2016; Narasimhan, Swink, & Kim, 2006). As a result, the concept of agility lacks clarity, strong theoretical bases and parsimony (Conboy, 2009; Sarker & Sarker, 2009). Agility is often confused with flexibility, adaptation, resilience and so forth. The lack of theoretical clarity is problematic for a concept that has such a significant following in practice and academia. As a result, this problem motivates the first research effort in

this dissertation, with the aim of better understanding team agility and uncovering what is known (and what is less known) about it.

Team Adaptive Mechanisms

The literature on team adaptation is rich, with a plethora of studies that show the underlying structural and cognitive adaptation mechanisms. For instance, adaptive teams may switch roles and reconfigure on the fly (Klein, Ziegert, Knight, & Xiao, 2006; LePine, 2005), restructure work (Bechky & Okhuysen, 2011; Rosen et al., 2011), ramp team resources up or down, make membership changes and so forth (Bedwell, 2019; Harrison, McKinnon, Wu, & Chow, 2000). In doing so, teams improvise and communicate, coordinate, and collaborate (Christian, Christian, Pearsall, & Long, 2017; Maynard, Kennedy, & Sommer, 2015). Team adaptation also occurs through cognitive processes such as collective sensemaking (Uitdewilligen & Waller, 2018; Weick, 2010), reflexivity (Schmutz, Lei, Eppich, & Manser, 2018), mental models and situational awareness (Burke, Stagl, Salas, Pierce, & Kendall, 2006; Zajac, Gregory, Bedwell, Kramer, & Salas, 2014). These structural, procedural and cognitive mechanisms that teams draw on to enable adaptation to surprises and crises form a rich scholarly foundation (for recent reviews, see Baard, Rench, & Kozlowski, 2014; Christian et al., 2017; Maynard et al., 2015; Rosen et al., 2011).

Nevertheless, not all teams are created equal, and many still fail in the face of adversity even if they planned and anticipated crises, and trained in advance (Quarantelli, 1988; Stachowski, Kaplan, & Waller, 2009). Studies of adaptation and crises evidence that some teams perform better than others (e.g., Majchrzak, Jarvenpaa, & Hollingshead, 2007; Marsch et al., 2005; Schakel, van Fenema, & Faraj, 2016; Stachowski et al., 2009), where structural or procedural mechanisms are not a major differentiating factor. This is perhaps unsurprising when one considers that surprises and crises contain distinctive and unexpected components (Kaplan, LaPort, & Waller, 2013) which trigger emotions in the people involved (Hällgren, Rouleau, & De Rond, 2018; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). And it is known that such conditions can have a lasting and harmful effect on team relations (Kahn, Barton, & Fellows, 2013). It is interesting that prominent adaptation studies have not surfaced emotional and relational components of teams during surprise and crisis events in teams (e.g., Bechky & Okhuysen, 2011; Weick, 2010; Wright et al., 2020), despite such mechanisms being a major factor in team processes (LePine et al., 2008). Overall, the poorly understood—but likely critical—role of emotions in the context of team adaptation (DeCelles & Anteby, 2020; Hällgren et al., 2018; O'Neill & Rothbard, 2017) motivate this dissertation

to uncover how teams may augment their chances of success under such conditions.

Change, Surprises, Crises

According to the Cambridge Dictionary and others, change is an umbrella term used to designate something becoming different. It may take the form of revision to project requirements by a customer, or adjustment in routine procedures. Change also includes sudden unexpected events such as surprises and crises. Surprises stem from situations—events or processes—that are unanticipated or that did not go according to plan (Cunha, Clegg, & Kamoche, 2006), and are characterized by a deviation from the standard way of doing things (Bechky & Okhuysen, 2011). Surprises may happen daily or rarely, may have no impact or be catastrophic. Studies of team agility typically deal with change in the form of surprises. Of additional interest in this dissertation are crises—a subset of surprises—as they are infrequent high-impact events that often require swift action (Pearson & Clair, 1998; Williams, Gruber, Sutcliffe, Shepherd, & Zhao, 2017). The Ebola outbreak, the Bhopal disaster, flash floods and the recent COVID-19 pandemic, are examples of crises that can shock organizations. And much less is known on how teams cope with crises because they are less commonly experienced and observed than regular work surprises.

Interestingly, change, surprises and crises are regarded as disorienting and ambiguous situations (Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010).

DISSERTATION OVERVIEW

The dissertation consists of three research chapters (2, 3, 4) that apply different designs and methods. Chapter 2 is an integrative review, while Chapters 3 and 4 are qualitative case studies. All three ensuing papers presented in this dissertation relate to how teams adapt in fluid situations, and are intended to be stand-alone and publishable in their own right. Throughout this report, I use “we” instead of “I” to describe work to which my supervisors contributed. Table 1.1 provides an overview of the chapters.

Table 1.1 Overview of dissertation chapters

	Research question	Method	Main findings	Authors	Dissemination and status
Chapter 1	Introduction				
Chapter 2 (study 1)	What is team agility, and how does it translate to adaptive outcomes?	Integrative literature review and synthesis	Team agility is defined, review findings are integrated in IMOI (inputs, mediators, outcomes) model. Team affective mechanisms surface as poorly understood.	M. Renault	Paper presented at British Academy of Management annual conference, Sep 2020.
Chapter 3 (study 2)	How do crises influence affective mechanisms of team adaptation?	Grounded theory-building, comparative case study (of teams)	Crises trigger emotions and give rise to affectively driven help cycles which through successive events co-evolve with team care and camaraderie. Teams with high adaptive performance positively convert emotions.	M. Renault M. Tarakci	Paper presented at INGRoup annual conference, Oct 2021 (received 'Best Student Paper' award). Under revision in Academy of Management Journal.
Chapter 4 (study 3)	How do Agile teams' emotional experiences impact their agility?		Following Agile principles is insufficient to adapt to crises. Thanks to affective leaders regulating team emotions, high-performing teams avoid cliques and collectively unite to respond to crises.	M. Renault M. Tarakci	Paper submitted to California Management Review, 2021 special Issue on Business Agility. Awaiting second round review.
Chapter 5	Conclusion				

Study 1 (Chapter 2): Untangling team agility: an integrative review and conceptualization

This study explores the popular concept of team agility through an integrative review, to understand what it is and what is known about how teams adapt to changing situations and surprises. Grounded in the literature, I synthesize and conceptualize agility as a team capability characterized through its structural and cultural elements, and define its performance outcomes (speed, flexibility, and responsiveness). For instance, a team culture centered around a learning orientation or and a customer focus is associated with agility. A team structure that promotes self-organization and simplicity, relates to agility. Then, the mediational adaptation mechanisms that turn agility inputs into outcomes are teamwork processes (e.g., communication, collaboration, changing membership, iterative working) as well as emergent cognitive (e.g., mental models, transactive memory) and affective states (e.g., trust). The team agility framework that ensues integrates all such factors into a popular inputs-mediators-outputs model. Finally, a team's affective adaptation mechanisms are surfaced as poorly understood, thus paving the path for further research. This poor understanding of affective adaptation in teams was unexpected: it fueled my interest as a scholar and practitioner, and totally transformed the

direction of my dissertation. From my initial self-declared interest in structural and procedural perspectives of team adaptation, I embarked into what became an enthralling endeavor to understand the role of team emotions.

Subsequently, studies 2 and 3 build upon rich data that I collected independently, in an in-depth, grounded theory-building case study of teams in a hospital. Over 24 months, I conducted semi-structured interviews, observed meetings, followed the WhatsApp chats of teams, and conducted a pulse emotion survey. We contrasted the journey of nine nursing teams who differentially experienced, coped, and adapted to consecutive crises in the hospital (floods, organizational restructuring, and the COVID-19 pandemic).

To introduce the next two chapters, I submit to the reader this harrowing revelation from one of the nurses I interviewed during the pandemic:

> *I'm on the verge of having my meltdown and I don't know when it will hit, and it will hit so hard because I know, I'm not feeling well. I want to cry all the time. If I don't want to murder myself, I want to murder everyone I work with. With COVID... I come to work with this feeling that I want to slap the shit out of everyone I encounter.*

Notwithstanding her profound emotional suffering, how can this nurse and her teammates unite and adapt to crises as a team? Chapters 3 and 4 expose several avenues.

Study 2 (Chapter 3): An affect-based view of team adaptation during crises

By comparing teams with opposing levels of past adaptive performance, this second study seeks to better understand *how* teams adapt: we contribute the fresh understanding of 'affective adaptation'. Teams' affective behaviors and interactions surface as a vital adaptation mechanism during crises, representing a departure from the more popular structural and cognitive adaptations. Specifically, we make theoretical contributions to theories of team adaptation, emotion-based emergence, and help. Our qualitative findings change the way we understand team adaptation, and reveal teams as emotionally charged collectives who adapt and respond to crises through affective behaviors and states. We show that crises trigger immense (negative) emotions in team members; although this may be intuitive, it is not well captured in extant literature. Then, emotions give rise to (affectively driven) help-seeking and help-giving cycles between teammates. Through time and successive crises, a team's help cycles co-evolve with emergent affective states (namely, team care and camaraderie)

which play a reinforcing and amplifying role, notably during COVID-19. We find that highly adaptive teams experience psychological safety, emotional support, positive harmony, commitment, and familial affect. Such affective states enable teams to convert negative member emotions into positive emotional sentiment, further facilitating affective adaptation. The study attempts to shift consensus in theories of team adaptation by directly revealing how adaptation over time is impacted by emotions.

Study 3 (Chapter 4): One for all and all for one: emotions and affective leaders in agile teams

This third study uses the same dataset and events as study 2 but focuses on managerial antecedents of agile performance. It conducts different analyses and shows that although nursing teams follow the principles of Agile management (e.g., self-organization, daily standups, retrospectives, and so forth), this is insufficient to result in adaptive performance during crises. Crises are undoubtedly challenging and negative events for people. Nevertheless, we observe that high-agility teams benefit from more positive emotions and affective tone. In particular, we unveil the critical role of a new breed of leaders—that we coin ‘affective leaders’—in cultivating team members’ emotions toward a positive team-level affective tone. Thanks to this emotion regulation, high-agility teams avoid cliques as member

emotional needs are met, and the team collectively unites to respond to crises. Theoretically, our emotion-based theoretical understanding of cliques is new. For organizational practice, we offer managerial implications and recommendations, underscoring the importance of emotion regulation during crises: a team's emotions and affective ties must be regulated and nurtured for the benefit of the whole, and leaders take front stage in this.

DECLARATION OF CONTRIBUTIONS

This section showcases contributions to the chapters of this dissertation and acknowledges the involvement of my promotor and co-promotor.

Chapter 1

I wrote this introductory chapter independently and tried to clarify key motivations for undertaking the research program. I explained my research design choices and summarized the three papers' main findings. My supervisory team (Prof. Dr. Van Den Ende and Dr. Tarakci) provided high-level feedback which I implemented.

Chapter 2

This study consisting of an integrative review and conceptualization of team agility was conducted independently, to gain a better understanding of

the field and more easily identify a possible research agenda. The supervisory team (Prof. Dr. Van Den Ende and Dr. Tarakci) provided review comments throughout the writing process, which I implemented.

Chapter 3

This is a study I initially designed independently and for which I began collecting field data. Quite early during data collection however, my co-promotor (Dr. Tarakci) provided critical feedback and ideas on emergent concepts, which enhanced the study's potential theoretical contributions. We then decided to collaborate and expand the study. I conducted the literature review, all data collection, coding and analyses, while Dr. Tarakci guided how to best make sense of the results and integrate them—for instance, how to distinguish the individual- from team-level phenomena or better position the findings in the literature. While I drafted the majority of the paper, my co-promotor constantly challenged my theoretical background, methods and implications sections, and helped improve the storyline. As a result, we have co-authored the paper of which I am first author.

Chapter 4

I conducted the work of this paper largely independently based on data I solely collected. My co-promotor (Dr Tarakci) directed me toward

conducting a more practitioner-focused study. This new outlook forced me to go back to my collected data and discover more practical insights. I am the main contributor of how nursing teams work according to Agile principles, how cliques emerge and how leadership style moderates performance. Nonetheless, Dr Tarakci gave important feedback throughout the process—especially focusing on leadership style and how to make more practical managerial contributions. As a result, we have co-authored the paper of which I am first author.

Chapter 5

I wrote this final chapter independently. I discuss the main implications for theory and practice and reflect on key adaptations that my research and I have experienced. My supervisory team (Prof. Dr. Van Den Ende and Dr. Tarakci) provided high-level feedback which I implemented.

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CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In every crisis, doubt or confusion, take the higher path - the path of compassion, courage, understanding and love.
— Dr Amit Ray

These are challenging and crisis-riddled times for organizations. In a constantly shifting world, businesses must carefully compose and manage teams, craft improvement programs as well as interventions to safeguard—and increase—performance. There is one universal certainty, however: employees, their work motivation and engagement, are central to such endeavors. For instance, during the recent COVID-19 pandemic most companies report that what they fear most is the drop in staff productivity (EY, 2020). Thus, such a crisis has only accelerated the need to better understand the underlying mechanisms that allow teams to respond to emergent challenges whilst remaining engaged.

This thesis began wanting to understand how agile teams—designed to successfully adapt together to changing situations (Beck, Schwaber, Beedle, & Highsmith, 2001)—experience, collectively cope and adapt to unexpected change and crises. This chapter begins by summarizing each study's findings and contributions (see Table 5.1). I then reflect on the

findings and how chapters integrate with one another, and finally reflect on my own PhD journey.

Table 5.1 Overview of dissertation findings and implications

	Chapter 2	Chapter 3	Chapter 4
Main findings and contributions	Team agility is integrated in IMOI model (inputs, mediators, outcomes). Team affective mechanisms surface as poorly understood.	Individual crisis-triggered emotions give rise to affective help cycles between teammates, which through successive events co-evolve with emergent care and camaraderie. We coin this 'affective adaptation', and affective states enable positive emotion conversion.	Following Agile management principles is insufficient to adapt to crises. Thanks to 'affective leaders' regulating team emotions, successful teams avoid cliques and collectively unite to respond to emergent surprises.
Main implications	Crises like COVID-19 underscore the lack of understanding of affective states as a team adaptive mechanism. The study of team emotions—especially in turbulent settings—may unlock important insights for team performance.	Teams high in help/affect cope and adapt better. Crises are emotional and a team's prior relational experiences serve as 'buffers' for future crises. Emotion-based help, care and camaraderie are vital affective social mechanisms of team adaptation, and must be nurtured. For adaptive performance, negative member emotions can be converted to positive team experience.	Emotions matter: team speed and flexibility are enabled by untapped positive emotional team mechanisms. Crises need 'affective leaders' to assess and regulate team members' unique emotions and experiences. Cliques should be dismantled before they lead to team division.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 2

Findings of Chapter 2

This integrative review allowed to clarify the concept of team agility and compare it to similar ones, and define it as the adaptive capability of a team to rapidly and flexibly respond to fluid situations. To characterize team agility, I mapped existing findings into structural and cultural elements of a team, which are turned into speed, flexibility and responsiveness by intermediary mediators: teamwork processes and emergent states (cognitive, affective). The integration of all such factors is presented in the form of a practical inputs-mediators-outputs (IMOI) framework for team agility, which helps better grasp its complexity. In so doing, it becomes apparent that emergent affective states in the context of team agility and adaptation are underrepresented, inviting further research.

Implications of Chapter 2

Beyond the theoretical relevance and importance of having a clearer and common understanding of the team agility concept, it is interesting to consider agility and the promise of affective states in the context of COVID-19.

With the seemingly never-ending cycles of lockdowns and working-from-home measures, organizations and their teams have undergone major

adaptations during the pandemic. For instance, enhancing collaboration internally and externally, changing customer communication and interaction channels, negotiating virtually, reskilling employees, and so forth (Enders et al., 2020; Movius, 2020; Narayandas et al., 2020; Slotkin et al., 2020). Beyond these procedural and structural types of adaptation which are predicted by the IMOI framework, COVID-19 has arguably had its biggest impact on employee emotions, morale and wellbeing (DiGangi, 2020; Spoorthy et al., 2020; Tan et al., 2020). Team members are anxious and scared due to the risk of infection, but managers can become overly controlling and untrusting because of remote working for instance (Joly, 2020). Emotional connections are easily lost as teammates miss personal and physical relationships. And it is in such situations that our lack of understanding of team affective states may be most crucial for teams to be able to respond and adapt to ongoing and future surprises. Indeed, change can trigger negative emotions in individuals (Liu & Perrewé, 2005) and the way they respond varies depending on their cognitive and emotional appraisals of the event (Perrewé & Zellars, 1999). Because affect is recognized as the driving force behind the behavior of team members (Ashkanasy et al., 2017), the study of emotions in teams—especially in

turbulent environments—may unlock vital insights for organizational performance.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 3

Findings of Chapter 3

This grounded theory-building comparative case study of nursing teams probed affective adaptation mechanisms in response to successive crises. We closely followed nine teams over 24 months through diverse events: floods, organizational upheavals, and the COVID-19 pandemic. An extensive and diverse dataset was collected through: interviews at different hierarchical levels, meeting observation, and text message communications.

The study contributes the fresh understanding of 'affective adaptation': teams' affective behaviors and interactions are a vital adaptation mechanism during crises. We unearthed that crises are emotional, and in highly adaptable teams these emotions give way to successful helping which co-evolves with team affective states. Our theory explains how, through time, successful cycles of compassion based help-seeking and comfort based help-giving in teams give rise to care and camaraderie. Together, these help and affective interactions enable positive emotion conversion within the team, and represent teams' successful

adaptation to crises—showing how adaptation is impacted by emotions over time.

Implications of Chapter 3

Our novel findings change the way we view the processes by which teams adapt, revealing teams as emotional social collectives whose affective behaviors and interactions constitute a vital adaptation mechanism. The study complements the cognitive and structural underpinnings of team adaptation (for recent reviews, see Baard et al., 2014; Christian et al., 2017; Maynard et al., 2015; Rosen et al., 2011) with an affective understanding. Despite a general view that affect is important in organizations (Barsade, 2002; Barsade & Gibson, 2007; Edmondson & Lei, 2014), individual and team-level affective mechanisms of team adaptation have remained largely underexplored. Our theory explains some of the interpersonal and social mechanisms that embody team affective adaptation, specifically, emergent affective states like care and camaraderie. The second contribution of our study is that crises are emotional for team members, which although intuitive it has not been thoroughly documented to date. Over time, adverse member emotions lead to negative team behaviors and affective states—and the opposite is true. A team's heightened positive emotions is what demarcates its ensuing behaviors and dynamics that lead to the buildup of

affective states. Our results help reframe a team's prior relational experiences as 'buffers' for future crises. Finally, we spotlight help behavior as intimately linked to emotions: help-seeking is an emotionally induced action of a distressed individual who seeks comfort in teammates, and that precedes team-level compassionate help-giving. Over time, this coevolution between help and affective states enables distressed help-seekers to perceive their teammates' offers of support as non-threatening. A team's build-up of affective states allows members to convert negative emotions into positive team-level emotions as time passes, enabling the subsequent help cycles and affective states. Help, like affective states, emerges as an important emotional adaptation mechanism in teams.

Implications for managerial practice point to the importance of nurturing care and camaraderie in teams, and encouraging help between teammates. For instance, fostering a safe space through trust and openness for making mistakes, or recognizing and celebrating positive gestures and achievements, or promoting a sense of family. Care and camaraderie can be viewed as affective reservoirs: the fuller they are with positive team affect, the more they can convert negativity into positivity and the more likely teams will be able to weather future crises.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTER 4

Findings of Chapter 4

This study uses the same qualitative dataset over the same crises as in Chapter 3 (with the addition of a survey), though it conducts different analyses to surface more managerial antecedents of agile performance. To this end, the study is written with a stronger practitioner focus and less on methodological description.

The chapter surfaces a fresh understanding of the impact of team emotions on team unity and leadership. First, we first evidence how nursing teams follow principles of Agile management—similar to software development teams. Yet, this is insufficient to lead to successful adaptation to crises. We find that during such events, negative member emotions can spiral and coalesce into negative team-level emotional experience and the formation of cliques. Together, these impede the team's agility. We showcase the overlooked role of leadership in Agile teams and propose a new element type: affective leadership. Affective leaders are critical to navigating their members away from negative emotions toward constructing a positive, team-level shared emotional ethos. This regulation of team emotions helps avoid cliques and leads the team to success in crises.

Implications of Chapter 4

Our study offers important insights into how a team's emotional experiences impact its agility, and how critical leaders are. First, in the area of processes and practices that yield adaptive performance, we offer a deeper understanding of how agility outcomes like speed and flexibility are a result of largely untapped emotional team mechanisms. This implies that emotions of team members, and associated affective relationships, matter and should be regularly assessed. Second, in leadership, we debut a critical, yet new, breed of affective managers who positively regulate their teams' emotions for an effective response to crises. This implies organizations in unstable and dynamic settings can select and train managers to be affective leaders, through understanding of members' unique emotions and motivations, nurturing team wellbeing, building a relaxed and positive atmosphere, and so forth. Then, because of their divisive impact, particular attention ought to be dedicated to cliques by proactively scouting and dispelling cliques. For instance, through the intentional fostering of trusting relationships and bonding between members. Finally, we offer an important (and new) theoretical insight into cliques, by linking their inception to negative member emotions and team-

level affective tone. This allows theorizing of the vital role that member emotion regulation by the leader plays, toward enabling agility.

DOING AGILE VERSUS BEING AGILE

In the integrative review paper (Chapter 2), I made the conscious choice of excluding studies of Agile (with a capital 'A') because Agile management focuses on the application of practitioner-targeted and popular approaches, methods and tools (e.g., Scrum, Kanban, Pair Programming and so forth). Rather, I focused on studies which attempted to define agility and sought agile team performance in the form of processes or mediators that turn team input conditions into outcomes (e.g., speed, flexibility, responsiveness). The premise was that teams which simply employ Agile tools and methodologies (e.g., doing daily stand-up meetings, working in pairs and in small iterative cycles, using Kanban-style boards, self-managing and so forth) do not necessarily adapt successfully to surprises. In other words, "doing Agile" is not the same as "being agile". Chapter 4 provided evidence of this through the study of nursing teams who were shown to employ Agile principles structurally and procedurally. Yet, not all nursing teams in the sample were successful in responding fast and flexibly to crises. Some collectively adapted by uniting and nurturing positivity, whilst others crumbled and disintegrated in the face of emergent adversity. Indeed,

Agile management principles have principally focused on Agile structure and cognitive processes. This dissertation reminds Agile scholars and practitioners of their oft-forgotten roots in valuing individuals and interactions over prescribed processes and tools (Beck, Schwaber, Beedle, & Highsmith, 2001). The gaps identified in Chapter 2, particularly around team emergent affective mechanisms, are addressed by the empirical findings of Chapters 3 and 4.

A RALLYING CALL TO EMBRACE EMOTIONS IN TEAMS

Beyond Agile management's structural and procedural approaches to managing change in teams, scholars of team adaptation processes have uncovered a rich and valuable body of knowledge in the cognitive mechanisms that teams draw on to enable adjusting to surprises and crises (for recent reviews, see Baard, Rench, & Kozlowski, 2014; Christian, Christian, Pearsall, & Long, 2017; Maynard, Kennedy, & Sommer, 2015; Rosen et al., 2011). Yet, time and again studies of crises or disasters show that some teams are more successful than others when adapting (e.g., Majchrzak, Jarvenpaa, & Hollingshead, 2007; Marsch et al., 2005; Schakel, van Fenema, & Faraj, 2016; Stachowski, Kaplan, & Waller, 2009). Even those who proactively plan for crises, or are trained in anticipation, can easily fail (Quarantelli, 1988; Stachowski et al., 2009). This is because

surprises and crises contain distinctive and unexpected components (Kaplan, LaPort, & Waller, 2013), and when they unfold they are disorientating and emotional for people involved (Hällgren, Rouleau, & De Rond, 2018; Maitlis & Sonenshein, 2010; Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). These rather chaotic conditions can have a profound and enduring damaging effect on team performance and the relationships between members (Kahn, Barton, & Fellows, 2013). As exposed in this dissertation, the affective mechanisms—a key factor in general team processes (LePine et al., 2008)—of team adaptation have remained understudied. Chapters 3 and 4 offer important insights into how teams differentially experience and cope with crises through affective mechanisms. Overall, teams that are able to experience adversity more positively, and build help and affective reserves, are more likely to successfully adapt.

Affective Adaptation

An underlying realization stemming from Chapter 3 is that emotions are not only elicited by a crisis, but they are importantly an ongoing adaptive response mechanism of individuals and teams. For instance, during COVID-19, people are not only emotional due to the pandemic itself also due to the ensuing adaptations that governments (e.g., lockdowns, home schooling) or organizations (e.g., only virtual meetings, work from home)

implement. Emotions elicited by such disruptions and adjustments in structures and processes give way to affective adaptations. Chapter 3 exposed that a team's collective sentiment is continually impacted by the team's prior affective and relational experiences. As a team deals with a crisis, the extent to which teammates emotionally helped, and related to, one another will aid in instilling more positivity and self-efficacy toward future crises (i.e., converting emotions). In other words, past affective experiences shape future ones, and although this seems intuitive, it is not well documented in the literature. And so, in contrast to the dominant structural and organizational bricolage that teams engage in during surprises (e.g., Bechky & Okhuysen, 2011), my study of crises has surfaced a parallel—but equally vital—form of affective bricolage (or adaptation). Although it is natural—and easiest perhaps—for teams to engage in structural and procedural changes, the underlying and subsequent emotional component must not be overlooked.

This was exemplified by a scholar and practitioner who recently attended a presentation of Chapter 3, who gave an example of work crisis experienced firsthand. He described how in a manufacturing facility, a team leader received a 03:00 AM phone call by a (usually) virile factory worker who was crying on the line. He was clearly distressed by a production

crisis. At that moment, the leader recognized the worker's anguish and his need for comfort. His first words to the distressed member were "Don't worry, no one is getting blamed for this. Stay put, I'm coming right away."

Affective Leadership

Chapter 4 surfaced the criticality of team leaders for managing and regulating team emotions, and helps explain how the affective adaptation that emerged from Chapter 3 is moderated by the leader. What I called affective leadership goes beyond being aware of team members' emotions, and aims to regulate and convert team emotions, navigating members away from negativity and toward positive team-level affective experience. The concept of interpersonal emotion regulation is not new, and has been extensively studied in teams dealing with emotions triggered by regular team activities that are largely within the team's control (Madrid et al., 2019; Vasquez et al., 2021). And most such studies focus on cognitive mediation processes (such as information sharing) between leader emotion regulation and team performance, or leaders' affective traits or motives (Madrid et al., 2018; Vasquez et al., 2021). What the dissertation contributes to this body of knowledge is the emergence of emotion regulation during the context of crises as external uncontrollable events that rock the team to its core. During crises, most established teamwork

processes and relations between members and leaders tend to break down. I have shown that under such pressures, cliques form or reinforce as an emotional coping mechanism of certain team members. The study demonstrated the need for an affective leadership style in teams working in unstable and dynamic environments as a means of managing the impact of negative emotions and subsequent breakdown of team relational mechanisms.

People and their emotions, aided by their human managers, are the ultimate adaptation mechanism: they determine success or failure. Chapters 3 and 4 complement one another and offer emergent antecedents to teams' agile performance outcomes identified in Chapter 2. The dissertation's findings aid teams and organizations better understand the impact of crises on people and human relational processes, and expose possible warning signs and managerial interventions. Clearly, my studies only scratched the surface of the role of emotions in team adaptation and performance during crises. Consequently, findings, contributions and managerial recommendations must be taken 'with a grain of salt', consistent with the generalizability warnings that come with qualitative case studies. Much work remains to be done, to investigate the surfaced team affective mechanisms in larger samples and in different settings. For instance, where

help and compassion are not as commonplace as in nursing. Or, in professions where teams are not predominantly female. Or, in organizational contexts where surprises and crises are not as ordinary for teams.

In a thesis on change and crises, this final chapter would not be complete without also reflecting on the adaptation my research forced upon me.

CONCLUDING REMARKS AND PERSONAL REFLECTION

When compiling the dissertation documents, and reflecting on my scholarly journey, I was struck by how the end result in no way resembled my PhD proposal five years prior. I share three insights, which surface the amount of change and adaptation that I, and my research, have gone through.

How little I know!

First, I began in 2016 with limited knowledge of the team agility literature, wanting to narrow down the processes that allow teams to respond to constant change. Specifically, I was interested in New Product Development teams. Moreover, I had the intention to conduct a theory-testing research program. Hundreds of papers later, I was struck by how much research had been done on structural and procedural aspects of team adaptation and agility—and how little I knew, and the (naïve) assumptions I

started with. The integrative review I conducted unexpectedly (at least to me) revealed team affective mechanisms as understudied, which transformed the remainder of my research.

A 180-degree turn!

Emotions, as a field of study, had largely escaped me—any many other scholars it appears—especially in team adaptation studies. Hundreds of more papers later, it became evident that the limited knowledge of team emotions and related processes in the context of crises, would be better addressed through a theory-building rather than a hypothesis-testing approach. Consequently, armed with revised research questions, I switched to conducting a grounded-theory, comparative case study of nursing teams in a hospital. As a result, I additionally had to undergo a rigorous and lengthy ethical approval process for human subject research at the hospital. Indeed, organizational staff are considered vulnerable participants in social research, and must be adequately protected—no different than clinical studies. I had not anticipated any of this at the start of my work, and the challenges were many.

Need data? Adapt!

The COVID-19 pandemic struck the hospital about midway through my nursing research, causing severe disruptions and forcing a change of

methods to exploit the real-time unfolding of the crisis. Like nurses dealing with potentially infected patients, I too was emotionally anxious and fearful of the risks posed by the virus—especially going into clinics to observe and interview nurses. The hospital established strict new protocols and minimized interactions. For instance, in-person meetings were discouraged and often cancelled. Despite my emotional reservations, this clearly was devastating for my data collection efforts. Through brainstorming with my co-promotor, we decided to pursue obtaining WhatsApp text messages of teams. This led to me chasing nursing managers to allow access into their texting groups, and export their exchanges. Two agreed, and then began the arduous journey of obtaining re-approval from the ethics board to allow this new data collection approach. Luckily, after relentless work, these messages were an invaluable complement to other datasets.

My short research journey has been full of ups and downs, exhilarating at times and emotionally draining at others, and has transformed my thinking as a scholar and practitioner. The role of emotions was a revelation, and it is unmistakable how they are discarded and brushed under the carpet in organizations. Dealing with coworkers' emotions is hard and can be intense. I experienced this firsthand during an interview, when a nurse revealed to me during COVID-19:

> *I'm on the verge of having my meltdown and I don't know when it will hit, and it will hit so hard because I know, I'm not feeling well. I want to cry all the time. If I don't want to murder myself, I want to murder everyone I work with. With COVID... I come to work with this feeling that I want to slap the shit out of everyone I encounter.*

Notwithstanding her profound emotional suffering, how can this individual and her teammates unite and adapt to crises as a team? I can only hope that my work further motivates others to join the recent movement calling for organizations and managers to embrace the significance and positive value of emotions in the workplace, and use them to their advantage to combat relentless surprises and crises.

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SUMMARY

All for One and One for All: How Teams Adapt to Crises

Surprises and crises can occur anytime, anywhere, and can impart acute challenges on organizational teams. Prior work on team adaptation has unveiled many cognitive and structural adaptive mechanisms. Similarly, management practice (e.g., Agile) has translated these mechanisms into popular tools and processes for teams to handle changing situations. Yet, these approaches confined to structural and cognitive mechanisms are incomplete in explaining the adaptive performance of teams as they overlook affect and emotions. Emotions are fundamental to human nature and teamwork, and crises can be intensely emotional events. This dissertation aims to complete the jigsaw puzzle: it uncovers the poorly understood affective mechanisms of team adaptation. I explain how emotions triggered by crises can activate emergent cycles of help, care and camaraderie between teammates. Teams that build such relational and affective reserves through successive crises, more successfully cope and respond to future events. Though, this is easier said than done: negative emotions can expedite the fragmentation of a team. Fortunately, this can be averted through affective leaders who positively regulate members' emotions. Such positivity helps avoid cliques as members' emotional needs

are met, and the team collectively unites to respond to crises. This dissertation offers a fresh perspective on team adaptation. Adaptation to crises, it seems, cannot be achieved without nurturing members' relational and affective ties for the benefit of the whole. This serves as a call for organizations to value emotions above blind adherence to packaged methodologies emphasizing mere structures, tools and processes.

Allen voor Eén en Eén voor Allen: Hoe Teams Zich Aanpassen aan Crises

Verrassingen en crises kunnen zich altijd en overal voordoen en kunnen organisatorische teams voor acute uitdagingen stellen. Eerder werk over teamadaptatie heeft vele cognitieve en structurele adaptatiemechanismen onthuld. Evenzo heeft de managementpraktijk (b.v. Agile) deze mechanismen vertaald in populaire hulpmiddelen en processen voor teams om met veranderende situaties om te gaan. Toch zijn deze benaderingen, die zich beperken tot structurele en cognitieve mechanismen, onvolledig in het verklaren van de adaptieve prestaties van teams, omdat ze affect en emoties over het hoofd zien. Emoties zijn fundamenteel voor de menselijke natuur en teamwerk, en crises kunnen intens emotionele gebeurtenissen zijn. Dit proefschrift onderzoektde slecht begrepen affectieve mechanismen van teamadaptatie. Ik leg uit hoe emoties veroorzaakt door crises

opkomende cycli van hulp, zorg en kameraadschap tussen teamgenoten kunnen activeren. Teams die dergelijke relationele en affectieve reserves opbouwen door opeenvolgende crises, kunnen met meer succes het hoofd bieden aan en reageren op toekomstige gebeurtenissen. Dit is echter gemakkelijker gezegd dan gedaan: negatieve emoties kunnen de fragmentatie van een team versnellen. Dit kan worden voorkomen door affectieve leiders die de emoties van de leden positief reguleren. Dergelijke positiviteit helpt kliekjes te vermijden omdat aan de emotionele behoeften van de leden wordt voldaan, en omdat het team zich dan collectief verenigt om op crises te reageren. Aanpassing aan crises, zo lijkt het, kan niet worden bereikt zonder het koesteren van de relationele en affectieve banden van de leden ten voordele van het geheel. Dit dient als een oproep aan organisaties om emoties belangrijker te vinden dan het blindelings volgen van verpakte methodologieën die louter structuren, instrumenten en processen benadrukken.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Max Renault was born in Cyprus on February 22, 1980. His academic background begins with a Bachelor of Electronic Engineering (BEng) in 2003, at the University of the West of England (UWE) Bristol. Then, following his passion and curiosity, he specialized with a Master of Science (MSc) in Spacecraft Technology and Satellite Communications at the University College London (UCL).

Max's professional career began in 2004 in very different industry sectors—IT/Billing, Manufacturing, Aerospace, Formula One, Biomedical Research—and varied functions, from Project Management, R&D and Operations.

Max started his PhD in September 2016 at Erasmus University, on part-time basis whilst working full-time in the private sector. He carried out his research under the supervision of Prof. J.C.M. van den Ende and Dr. M. Tarakci.

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