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**Theorizing dramaturgical resistance leadership from the leadership campaigns of
Jeremy Corbyn**

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Abstract

What are the practices through which resistance leadership transitions from marginality to power? We present a framework of dramaturgical resistance leadership, paying particular attention to the relational dynamics between leaders, internal factions and external stakeholders. In doing so, we draw on an ‘expanded’ social drama analysis framework informed by the work of social anthropologist Victor Turner, incorporating insights from the resistance and critical leadership studies literatures. We develop our framework through a narrative case analysis of the British Labour Party’s 2015 and 2016 internal elections of its current leader Jeremy Corbyn where we identify a space between the phases of relational crisis and redress that offers possibilities for the enhancement and growth of resistance leadership. Within this space, we identify three practices of dramaturgical resistance leadership: ‘anti-establishment leadering’; ‘organizational redrawing’; and, a ‘trifold focus’. These offer a means of rethinking the purpose and role of leaders within resistance movements alongside the co-constituted relations and generative practices that enable resisting groups to gain traction.

Keywords: resistance leadership, liminality, collective leadership, social drama theory, communitas

Introduction

There is current interest in the forms of resistance leadership that bring about changes in structural arrangements (Mumby, 2005; Zoller and Fairhurst, 2007), and in the limits of their less hierarchical characteristics (Sutherland, Land and Bohm, 2014). Current concerns around globalism, climate change, gender issues and social polarization tend to focus that interest more on political forces than on organizational dynamics. Nevertheless, some still question the capacity of resistance to bring about productive change and of this conceptual

area for self-criticism and the ability “to identify its own injuries” (Courpasson, 2016: 99). Such questions drive this inquiry into resistance leadership.

We theorize a dramaturgical framework of resistance leadership, utilizing a narrative case analysis of the British Labour Party’s 2015 and 2016 elections of its leader, Jeremy Corbyn. The case offers insight into how resistance leadership may enact and move a group from the margins to power, generating change in the status quo. Conceptually, we draw upon and expand Victor Turner’s social drama analysis (SDA) framework (1969, 1974), incorporating insights from resistance and critical leadership studies literatures, to identify key practices that seem to inform the transition of resistance leadership to power.

Turner’s SDA framework consisting of the four phases of breach, crisis, redress and schisms, while less cited than the dramaturgical theories of Burke and Goffman, is in our opinion more suitable for such an inquiry (McFarland, 2004). Firstly, it is interested in the emergence of leadership from situations of disorder or uncertainty and is thus receptive to non-predicted shifts. Secondly, it privileges conflict rather than stability as the everyday ‘norm’ in social processes, potentially challenging the view that resistance is temporary or extraordinary. Finally, SDA is attuned to processes where configurations, situations and interactions are in motion, making it ideal to explore a leadership dynamic encompassing a shift from resistance to power.

Having identified a gap in the literature, which has focused on the practices of groups who remain at the periphery, we contribute by illuminating resistance leadership practices inherent in the transition from marginality to power. Exploring and theorizing such transitions enables us to offer a more agentic account of resistance leadership that captures, in circumstances of heightened uncertainty, its relational, emergent and conflictual constitution.

We theorize three of its practices that emerge in the space between relational crisis and redress. First, we posit *anti-establishment leadering* as the counter-intuitive emergence of a resistance leader who appeals to followers because he or she embodies the antithesis of traditional charismatic leadership rooted in symbolizing an opposing set of relational principles and engaging in different, for example, non-hierarchical and distributed practices (Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011), performed through a resisting set of activities. Second, we offer *organizational redrawing*, the questioning and testing of taken-for-granted assumptions about organizational boundaries and power, and the consequent construction of a collective leadership that stretches beyond existing actors and spaces. Third, we theorize a *trifold focus* of leadership, a shifting between resisting a hostile status quo, subduing resistance from the newly deposed leaders, and building alternative forms of ‘communitas’ (Turner, 1974). All three practices facilitate resisters to go beyond the trap of merely re-enforcing the practices and structures of power they have deposed (Bloom, 2016; Collinson, Smolović Jones and Grint, 2018).

Our focus is on the internal and organizational dynamics of the Labour Party with an emphasis on the resisting dynamics rather than the larger narrative of the party within British politics. Consequently, we have interviewed 34 party strategists, employees and activists, thereby accessing an ‘insider’ story of the 2015 and 2016 internal elections and the movement of Corbynism from resistance to established leadership. Although ours is an exceptional case study - a dramatic tale of rapid and radical change in the leadership of an organization encompassing a form of mass mobilization - we do hold a broader value for our contribution beyond its immediate context, in particular organizations with a stronger social mission, such as charities, pressure groups and certain public sector organizations, which

have pre-existing norms of stakeholder involvement and elements of democratic practice embedded within their processes.

The remainder of the paper proceeds as follows. We first review the literature on resistance in general and resistance leadership in particular. We then offer Turner's SDA as a fruitful basis for theorizing dramaturgical resistance leadership. We outline our narrative case method, focusing on our three practices and integrate them into our dramaturgical resistance leadership framework. We conclude by reflecting on the value of our study for research and practice.

Resistance and resistance leadership

The concept of resistance has shifted theoretically, empirically and practically. Once seen as an organizational challenge to management (Ybema, Thomas and Hardy, 2016), or as covert opposition to a dominant tyrannical force (Juris and Sitrin, 2016), resistance now encompasses many individual and collective actions of dissent, opposition, protest and disengagement. Resistance is currently rife in political campaigns, grassroots cultural movements, virtual and viral firestorms, everyday work practices and protest movements.

Defining and theorizing resistance has grown correspondingly complex. The *Sage Handbook of Resistance* (Courpasson and Vallas, 2016) says resistance studies are “in a state of disarray” (p. 1), “a scholarly no-man's land”, “a moving target” (p. 2) and “a liquid, dynamic form of social and political action” (p. 14). Yet amidst such conceptual chaos lies “a deeper and more ubiquitous yet often elusive phenomenon that warrants much more attention and theorization than it receives” (Courpasson and Vallas, 2016: 3). We therefore need to avoid vagueness without bounding resistance comfortably in locations such as organized protest or hidden contention.

Resistance leadership relies on the less powerful to act as agents of their subjectivities and bearers of non-dominant ideologies (Mumby, 2005). Their dissent ideally disrupts stable meaning systems (Zoller and Fairhurst, 2007), challenging positional leader interpretations (Collinson, 2005; 2011) individually or collectively, informally or formally, chaotically or systematically (Fleming and Spicer, 2008). While in conditions of strong ideological leadership, collective action may mobilize only slowly, ‘ideological polarization’ can ultimately surface or create divisions (Van Dijk, 1998). The division of a collective into factions based on support for, or opposition to, its leader, exposes differences and opposing ideologies. Attempts to resist leadership, however, often require leadership in those following (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012).

We must therefore extend considerations of resistance as negative and seek to understand it as also potentially productive and emancipatory (Juris and Sitkin, 2016). Resistance is “an enactment of alternative power relations, a creative mode of potential or ‘power-to’ that constructs alternative forms of subjectivity and sociality even as it challenges dominant expressions of *potestas* or power over” (Juris and Sitkin, 2016: 32). This view carries the important theoretical and practice assumption that power and resistance become interdependent or “closely knit together in complex and often contradictory ways” (Fleming and Spicer, 2008: 304). The ongoing choreography between power and resistance renders each less distinguishable: we therefore avoid assuming asymmetry between established leadership and resistance.

Bringing leadership and resistance together helps us better understand processes of mobilization from “covert to overt conflict and action” (Zoller and Fairhurst 2007: 1333) indicative of the fluid, ambiguous and potentially contradictory character of the underlying power relations (Gagnon and Collinson, 2017). Within any institutional context resistance

through difference or oppositional practices (Gagnon and Collinson, 2017) reveals an evolving subjectivity as resisting actors engage with a previously dominant foe and, indeed, notions of dominance more generally (Courpasson, 2016). Based on this discussion, we define resistance leadership as the engagement in concrete acts of resistance pursued, despite impediments, by those deemed less powerful in order to modify or rebalance the existing power relationships. The construct of resistance leadership thus moves the inquiry away from a focus on “coping within the status quo” towards “challenging power relations” (Zoller and Fairhurst 2007: 1333), offering and enacting alternative directions.

Critical leadership scholars, however, warn against romanticizing such leadership, thus avoiding the naturalization of the privileged status of resisting leaders based on imaginary heroic capabilities: no leader or their practices should remain beyond criticism (Collinson et al., 2018). Further, we should avoid reifying individual leaders, thus ensuring that the development of democratic and participative structures does not remain the sole ‘responsibility’ of these ‘permanent’ individual leaders (Ganz, 2000).

Sutherland et al. (2014) attempt to disentangle notions of leaders, leadership, leaderlessness and ‘anti-leadership’ in a social movement context, providing helpful new constructs for resistance leadership. They consider any individual who chooses to progress challenges and opportunities in a way that mobilizes others a ‘leadership actor’. In contexts such as social movements, leadership actors have been found to be ‘anti-leadership’ figures who do not rely on positional power, sometimes rendering organizations leaderless by rotating influence roles. This inquiry challenges “conventional power relations between leaders as power holders and followers as powerless” (Sutherland et al., 2014: 774), including resistance work within the leadership frame.

What current research lacks, however, is an empirical investigation into how resistance leadership intertwines with the trajectories of established power and how it constructs differences in purpose and practices to destabilize the established leadership's dominance. There is also a need to study whether the emergence of a charismatic leader or the search for a leader-centric solution to the concerns of the dominated is different in the context of resistance leadership distributed across multiple actors. Consequently, the following three research questions drive our inquiry:

- 1) How does this case illuminate the relationship between leaders, leadership and resistance?
- 2) How does resistance leadership transition from marginality to power without becoming the new status quo and/or replicating what it seeks to overthrow?
- 3) What practices will aid resistance leadership as it seeks to challenge the status quo while assuming power?

In summary we do not yet fully understand the practices specific to the leadership of groups as they transit from resistance to power. To develop understanding we utilize a discursively textured, theoretically fluid and process/practice-focused form of theorizing, drawing on Turner's SDA framework to begin this task.

Extending Victor Turner's social drama analysis for the study of resistance leadership

Turner's social drama analysis (SDA) framework belongs to a set of theories and approaches called dramatism. Kenneth Burke, Erving Goffman and Victor Turner are considered the three primary theorists in this genre and we note from the outset that there is no one unified theoretical set of assumptions here but a loose body of work drawing on theatre, performance and drama to understand everyday social life and interaction (Riessman, 1993).

Sinha (2010) succinctly contrasts the three: where Burke is literal ('life is drama'), Goffman is metaphorical ('life is like drama') and Turner is meta-theatrical ('life and drama are interdependent'). A detailed discussion of the similarities and differences between the three is outside the scope of this paper, although we need to position leadership within and across the three as a prelude to focusing and extending the application of Turner to resistance leadership.

Burke's thinking assumes social order, structure and hierarchy as inevitable and significant. Accordingly, it is not surprising that his work appears to support a positional view of leaders, where roles as "superiors, inferiors and equals" are fixed in "a drama of social hierarchy" (Duncan 1962, xix). This Burkean overemphasis on hierarchy appears somewhat limiting and Turner shows hierarchy and order are only partial aspects of social life. Turner's approach also challenges the Goffmanian stress on fit and congruence between social norms and behaviour. Unlike Goffman, for whom all social interactions are dramatic, Turner's dramaturgy begins when crises due to conflicts arise in the daily flow of events, and to that end the social drama is meta-theatre (Turner, 1987).

Turner's emphasis on conflict, constraints and fragmentation positions his thinking as relevant and significant in an inquiry into resistance leadership. From this viewpoint, social conflicts bring to the surface the deeply ingrained moral imperatives and constraints amongst group members. Specifically, a conflict reveals what divides group members, provides invaluable insight into the processes associated with the destruction of group cohesion and highlights any fragmentation concealed underneath their co-operative transactions.

Turner's SDA posits four phases: breach, crisis, redress and schism. Social dramas arise "when interests and attitudes of groups and individuals (stand) in obvious opposition" (Turner, 1974: 33). Similarly, resistance leadership assumes that the legitimacy of domination

by a leader, group of leaders and/or leadership practices (henceforth collectively referred to as ‘established leadership’) is unstable and can readily prompt resistance (Courpasson and Vallas, 2016).

Turner suggests the genesis of the drama (first phase) is located in the “deliberate non-fulfilment of some crucial norm regulating the intercourse of the parties” (Turner, 1974: 38). The resulting disapproval may then be directed at the established leadership’s ideology and domination. This may become evident in everyday micro-resistance practices such as small material-discursive moves, “hidden micro resistance practices or individual infrapolitics” (Mumby et al., 2017) that counteract the denial of selfhood or identity (Harding, Ford and Lee, 2017) and may fuel more collective forms of resistance. During the breach phase, the discontent expressed ‘backstage’ (Goffman, 1959; Ybema, and Horvers, 2017) needs to connect more widely and avoid evaporation (Courpasson and Vallas, 2016).

The second phase of Turner’s framework is the ‘relational crisis’ that revives “ancient rivalries and unresolved vendettas” (Turner, 1974: 38), involving “a major cleavage between factions” (Turner, 1974: 40), thus exposing the instability of the social order. The relational crisis between the resistance and the established leadership factions can be identified as the property of the resistance leadership, whose emergent leadership practices offer direction through the struggles of its members (Barker, 2001).

The third, ‘redressive’, phase of Turner’s framework illuminates the machinery that is used to “seal up punctures in the social fabric” (Turner, 1974: 38). In this phase, ‘social elders’, who are outsiders to the direct conflict, begin to use their negotiating power to resolve the relational crisis through encouraging some changes desired by the resisting enclave, which can lead to a temporary realignment of power relations (Courpasson et al.,

2012). However, when those who remain dissatisfied demand more than concessions, we do not know how these resisting factions are unified. Thus, we need to study how external actors' involvement fuels the relational crisis and to discover more about how external actors may affect the dynamics of power amongst resisters.

The final stage of the drama, of temporary climax, solution or outcome, is an opportunity to “take stock of the dynamics of the resistance and the social power structures” (Turner, 1974: 42). Social dramas may result in re-integration or ongoing dissonance: ‘schism’ (Turner, 1974: 41-42). Re-integration involves either an alignment of frames and aspirations, which normally reinforces legitimacy and reproduces the status quo, or negotiation leading to “concessions and compromises” (McFarland, 2004: 1254). Irreparable schisms are “unstable outcomes where all parties agree to live in a state of dissonance because the cost of compromise seems too high” (McFarland, 2004: 1292).

Our inquiry is concerned with the space between relational crisis and redress, which we posit as a generative space where resistance leadership can take hold. Essential to this space, and leadership through it, are two further concepts from Turner, *communitas* and *liminality*. According to Turner, for the organization to survive as a unit, members need to approach relational and socio-structural issues from a communal state, “an unstructured or rudimentarily structured and relatively undifferentiated *communitas*, community, or even communion of equal individuals who exercise authority” (Turner, 1969: 96). This may be considered a utopian view, which suggests that consensus around desired outcomes is built from open and spontaneous dialogue between factions (Turner, 1974: 50).

According to Turner, in the liminal space, which is “betwixt and between the original positions arrayed by law, custom, convention and ceremony” (Turner, 1969: 95), members

“generate a deeper awareness of the principles that bond them beyond and above the issues that have temporarily divided them” (Turner, 1969: 83). In liminality, the social unit is also ‘self-conscious’ - aware that the struggle has become existential. The group has the “clarity of someone fighting in a corner for his [sic] life” (Turner, 1974: 40), thereby facilitating experimentation and improvisation - trying (and sometimes discarding) new ways of acting and new combinations of symbols (Turner, 1992: 52). However, such liminality generates a sense of disorganization and sometimes exasperation, so we need to understand what type of leadership will enable members to embrace its spirit of “chaos, a storehouse of possibilities” (Turner, 1984: 42).

Weber (1995) has pointed out that Turner’s conceptualization does not recognize political contestation: the ‘conflict’ over narrative voice, of who gets to retell the story from which position. We do not deny this limitation – and indeed hope to address it through our theorizing - but we also argue that Turner’s anti-structural terms of *communitas* and liminality, allowing less of a role for positional leaders but more for the dramatization of leadership processes, may provide valuable new insights.

Methodology

We offer a “phronesis based case study” (Thomas, 2010: 579), drawing predominantly on a phenomenological and case narrative approach. Here, we are interested in case study research as it is context-dependent knowledge, attuned to “a nuanced view of reality” (Flyvbjerg 2006: 223) that privileges closeness to ‘real life’ and ‘rich ambiguity’ (Flyvberg, 2006: 237). For Flyvberg, such a case study is an ideal methodology, “not in the hope of proving anything, but rather in the hope of learning something” (Flyvbjerg 2006: 224).

Thomas (2010: 577) aligns such learning with both abduction and narrative. He frames abduction as an analysis that offers tentative, provisional and 'looser' theorizing that is necessary for inquiry into the complexities of social life. Because narrative weaves insight from practical or experiential knowledge through the unfolding sequencing of events with many inconsistencies and gaps, Thomas positions narrative inquiry as the vehicle linking phronesis and abduction. Narrative knowledge is "pregnant with paradigms, metaphors and general significance" (Flyvbjerg 2006: 237), and can therefore "test views directly in relation to phenomena as they unfold in practice" (Flyvbjerg 2006: 235). Here, it is resistance leadership that we wish to 'test'.

Data collection

Our priority was to offer a rich account of the leadership dynamics within the Labour Party both prior to and following Corbyn's leadership campaigns. We sought a purposive sample of research informants involved in the 2015 and 2016 leadership campaigns who could offer a cross-section of views from various perspectives inside the party faction, ranging from grassroots activists to senior campaign strategists. Our data came from 34 semi-structured interviews. The roles of the participants were as follows:

Table 1: List of Participants and their roles

<i>Participant Description</i>	<i>Number</i>
Parliamentarians (UK and devolved parliaments)	4
Current parliamentary candidates	2
Labour Party senior strategists and organisers	8
National Executive Committee members	2
Elected representatives on the party's National Policy Forum	2
Elected Labour councillors	4
Elected local party executive representatives	6
Active party members and local campaigners	2
Trade union organisers	3
Socialist leaning intellectual, Labour member and writer	1
Total	34

While we have drawn on voices outside the resisting faction within the party to present a more ‘balanced view’, we have sought to develop a rich understanding of party insiders’ perspectives on the change in leadership in the time period focused on. To protect the anonymity of our sources we have clustered them into three umbrella roles - senior leader (people close to Corbyn, within his campaign team), mid-level leaders (encompassing elected parliamentarians not in Corbyn’s core team, senior field organisers and representatives on various national party bodies) and local leaders (people elected to leadership roles by local parties and elected local councillors).

Our interviews were semi-structured and narrative-based, seeking to explore the life histories of participants within the context of Labour Party politics, and allowing them to reflect on their subjective positioning within a larger matrix of events and norms (Wolf, 2019). The interview questions related to participant involvement in, experiences of, and attitudes towards the Labour Party prior to the campaigns; attitudes to Corbyn as a leader;

experiences of the campaigns; and, reflections on the future of the party.

Our intent was to generate not an impartial account of the past, but to surface clues as to the purpose and ethos participants attributed to leadership. By treating interviews as sensemaking forums we hoped to surface collective norms, “judgements as to what may be regarded as good or bad, right or wrong, including basic beliefs and values” (Peticca-Harris, 2018: 7). Important in this process of sensemaking was our reflexive awareness of the identity and role of the interviewer – who had a history of 19 years as a party member and seven as a party employee, and who had shared some experiences with seven of the participants - in co-constructing the meanings of narratives (Ylijoki, 2005). Where these shared experiences existed the interviewer asked questions to enable critical analysis of the discussed events and alternative perspectives. The interviews elicited stories, feelings and thoughts that the interviewer had been unaware of, allowing for surprises and ‘mysteries’ (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007) to surface.

Data analysis

Our analysis focused on identifying narrative components that constituted the ‘composite narrative’ (Maitlis, 2012: 495) of what we title dramaturgical resistance leadership. In so doing we sought to “discern a plot that unites and gives meaning to the fragmented elements in the interview material” (Peticca-Harris, 2018: 9). Our underlying logic was abductive (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007; Cunliffe and Eriksen, 2011), as we tried not to escape our previous knowledge but rather to discover mysteries (Alvesson and Kärreman, 2007) that forced us to rethink our views. In a process of iterative reading and analysis aimed at making the narrative ‘sensible’ (Cunliffe and Coupland, 2012: 66), we questioned one another’s interpretations and pursued counter-explanations.

The interviews were transcribed and shared amongst the authors, who each read the material independently, bracketing off sections of the texts relevant to leadership and resistance dynamics. Following an initial discussion of impressions gleaned, the author-interviewer used the material to construct a 14,000-word meta-narrative. Acknowledging that familiarity might hinder fresh interpretation, the three authors embarked on an abductive and iterative editing and re-working of the document (Edwards et al., 2018; Iszatt-White, Kempster and Carroll, 2017), shifting between the meta-narrative, leadership theory and data not yet drawn on, seeking gaps and unexplained phenomena. Here, the more distant perspectives of the other two authors were valuable.

In the process of revising the narrative we completed another 18 interviews, more than doubling the original dataset. While keeping to the same interview format, we wanted to refine our understanding of the resistance leadership narrative. The analysis of the full set of interviews led to the identification of three sustained practices, which we refer to in the next section as narrative components, and these weave together the resistance leadership storyline. Having identified our components, we went back through the interview data and re-analysed all the empirical material related to each in order to refine the resistance leadership narrative. As a result, rather than a fixed and linear narrative, we have sought to build a deconstructed narrative, identifying and focusing on the three components, which are akin to narrative's character (anti-establishment leadering), context (organizational redrawing) and action (trifold focus) that when put together tell this narrative of practices of dramaturgical resistance leadership.

Three Narrative Components

Anti-establishment leadering

Our narrative begins in 2015 when the most unlikely of candidates - Jeremy Corbyn - scraped together 35 votes for nomination as his party's leader. His support came from an unlikely coalition of MPs who were convinced he would not win but wanted their socialist views to be aired, those who wanted the full spectrum of the party to be represented at leader selection events, and those who thought his nomination in itself, regardless of outcome, would be conciliatory across the party. In short, he was a token candidate and no-one thought he could actually win. Three months later, with over 60% of the vote in the first round, Corbyn walked away with the leadership and has retained it, not without huge internal and external controversy, to at least the point at which we are writing this article. Our case study is not a leader-centric narrative where leaders are the "prime movers" rather than not but "the emergent phenomenon within leaderful situations" (Wood, 2005: 1103). Nonetheless Jeremy Corbyn is one essential component in better understanding the transition from resistance to power. Exploring the figure and functioning of Corbyn helps us identify the pluralist manner in which leader-figures can be drawn upon by resisting groups. In starting with him we explore the nature of 'leadering'. We refer to Corbyn as leader in terms of a verb – leadering – to draw attention to the work he as a leader-symbol performs for his supporters and, in turn, the work to which they put such symbolism. This symbolic work seems crucial in informing us of what happens in the liminal space between a relational break from the past but preceding the acquisition of power. For his supporters, Corbyn is both a presence and an absence: it is Corbyn's *lack* of established leadership qualities - his non-polished, unspun, morally consistent and modest presentations of self and of the role of a leader - that means he can act as a marker around which creative forms of *communitas* or "a sense of fellowship or togetherness" can be enacted (Pöyhönen, 2018: 585). We note that the presence of anti-establishment leadership in this form essentially questions the importance of a heroic and

masculine image that over time becomes seductive to both the leader as well as the led (Calás and Smircich 1991).

We have identified four dimensions of anti-establishment leadering in relation to Corbyn, all of which convey the meaning we received from respondents of the potent figure of Corbyn as a key symbol for their sensemaking and resistance leadership, which flourishes and finds voice in the liminality between resistance and power. In this anti-establishment leadering narrative, ‘leader (person)’ interleaves with ‘leadership (process)’, and hence transiting to power, “is not being over-attributed to the influence of the leader” (Pye 2005: 35). The first dimension is Corbyn as channel/mirror of others, as table 2 attests:

Table 2: Corbyn as a Channel/Mirror

A Channel/ Mirror
<i>‘We needed a high-level person to push it on, to be more than just a mouthpiece, a channel through which those ideas could be expressed, you know, a focal point in which to build around’</i> [senior leader]
<i>‘There was a frontline political figure who seemed to reflect their own beliefs and values, and, you know, give them hope that a different kind of politics was possible.’</i> [senior leader]
<i>‘...quite clearly trying to just channel ideas and channel a lot of people’s enthusiasm rather than direct. All of that’s very appealing. And he’s a bit unconventional, quite fun as well’</i> [local leader]

The terms used (*‘mouthpiece’, ‘channel’, ‘focal point’*) point to a figure who gives voice to the energy, values and ideas of others who have already made a relational break with the organization’s status quo. While respondents are not projecting their worries and anxieties onto their leader, we do see that a different type of leadership is being attributed to the leader (Sutherland, et al. 2014). We note that the positional significance of the figure (*‘high-level’, ‘frontline’*), the verbs (*‘give’* not *‘direct’*), the prepositions (*‘a channel **through**’ ‘a focal point in which to build **around**’*), and adverbs (*‘more’, ‘just’*) all suggest a role as a conduit

for others rather than a lead of others. In this sense, anti-establishment leadering is not about exercising the hierarchical prerogative to impose a leader's vision; rather it is about creating the possibility for the group to develop its own mission (Barker, 2001). The notion of being a focal point reoccurred frequently throughout the data as table 3 illustrates:

Table 3: Corbyn as a focal point of shared ideals and beliefs

A Focal Point
<i>'It's not about one person and their ambitions, it's about...just act[ing] as a, sort of, you know, spokesperson or focus point for those shared ideals and beliefs'</i> [senior leader]
<i>'I think his manner helps because it doesn't alienate, it's a very inclusive manner. I think that's probably what's needed when you're acting as the focal point or the starting point for a movement that's building around an idea. People engage with people, not necessarily ideas'</i> [mid-level leader]
<i>'It's important to have that focal point, almost a mathematical point...if every person who thinks like Jeremy Corbyn thinks to talk to everyone else then they could all realize that they could all vote for Jeremy Corbyn quite easily'</i> [senior leader]

We note the repetition of 'point', sometimes in combination with an ancillary term, 'starting' and 'mathematical' draws attention to what lies beyond or connected to something quite bounded. We can also play with the term, recognizing that all these comments imply that Corbyn is not the point ('it's not about one person'), but instead a marker for what is the point, what is 'shared' in terms of values. Such playfulness of the 'point' of Corbyn was typical of the creativity experienced by participants in the liminal space between resistance and power. We also meet something of a conundrum; that whilst it is the ideas that Corbyn channels, reflects and mirrors, there is still the need for a person to be a focal point for those.

That Corbyn was the person at the time who so many engaged with was at least partly because he constituted such a decisive rupture, break and difference to the leadership that had come before, as table 4 attests:

Table 4: Corbyn as a rupture from the past or a non-traditional leader

A Rupture
<p><i>'You know, he's not a traditional leader. He's not somebody that finds it easy, sometimes, to assert himself, but I think, you know, for thousands of people he's clearly very refreshing, because he represented such a break from the kind of leadership style that we'd seen over the previous couple of decades.'</i> [senior leader]</p>
<p><i>'We were winning support from places that we hadn't expected, because they were bored by the other candidates, and that was more of a negative, kind of... That wasn't so much them going for Jeremy. It was more them not wanting more of the same...'</i> [local leader]</p>
<p><i>'He was just, you know, breathtakingly, refreshingly different from the others in that he was consistent in all the estimates. They're so used to politicians saying anything that they wanted, they thought people wanted to hear....'</i> [local leader]</p>

Corbyn was considered *'breathhtakingly refreshingly....different'* and *'such a break'* from the *'traditional leader'* who, while more assertive (according to the senior leader respondent) is more predictable (according to the second respondent) and indeed focused on popularity as opposed to a consistent morality (according to the third). The power of this rupture from a perceived previous relationship of domination (Courpasson, 2016) is so great that Corbyn's appeal can be attributed more to it than can the character of Corbyn in and of itself (*'It was more them [organizational members] not wanting more of the same'*). In a similar sense to being a channel and a focal point, being a rupture points to Corbyn's value and appeal as more about what he is associated with, the possibility he creates for others to break from the past, and what he represents, than the person himself. Resistance then becomes "a creative mode of potential or 'power-to' that construct[ed] alternative forms of subjectivity and sociality" (Juris and Sitkin, 2016: 32).

However, this narrative element is more nuanced and complex than the enactment of the dimensions above, which anyone who took part in or watched the 2017 election would

attest to. Respondents pointed to counter-cultural, high-risk and everyday qualities of Corbyn, which we argue constitute a kind of anti-charisma, as illustrated in table 5:

Table 5: Corbyn as Anti-Charismatic leader

Anti-Charisma
<p><u>Counter-Cultural</u></p> <p><i>'....they want to put Corbyn into some sort of messianic box...his unique characteristics...and where an attachment to, you know, him as an individual is very pronounced. I've only met him two or three times but he seems the exact opposite of that when you're sitting near him. So the idea that he is, you know, that sort of uniquely charismatic figure I would imagine must be very uncomfortable.'</i></p> <p>[senior leader]</p> <p><i>'I think that was such a large part of the appeal about Jeremy that he wasn't this domineering, sort of, fierce alpha male, macho type of leader but more of an inspirer, almost like a spiritual leader or a faith leader. He connects with people rather than through like fear or obedience or fear of the consequences type way of doing'</i></p> <p>[mid-level leader]</p>
<p><u>Everyday</u></p> <p><i>'Well, the thing that drew them in at the nomination stage was that he didn't have bad characteristics. He was a nice person. He would talk to you, he was polite, he was honest and straightforward. He'd always been consistent, and, you know, people thought he was harmless and wasn't going to win, and so they were prepared to nominate him'.</i></p> <p>[mid-level leader]</p> <p><i>'I mean, yes...so someone who...what you see is what you get which...I think that attracted a lot of people as a person of principle and he's honest and he's straightforward and decent, caring, compassionate, reasonable but then also imagining a society that works for the many not the few'</i></p> <p>[senior leader]</p>
<p><u>High Risk</u></p> <p><i>'It was a once in a generation opportunity to have someone talk in the way that he talks about issues. It could all go wrong, I mean, I thought at the time, it could all go wrong but at least we've tried.'</i></p> <p>[local leader]</p> <p><i>'You know, the negative side of it, I suppose, is because Jeremy's always...feels really passionately about a number of different projects. He's never been someone that's said, right, this is the only thing that matters right now, we do this, then we do that, then we do... You know, so maybe there wasn't always as clear a direction about the leadership campaign as there might have been.'</i></p> <p>[mid-level leader]</p>

Corbyn did not fit a traditional ('messianic', 'alpha') leader model and the most frequently expressed comment made was that he was 'the exact opposite' of such a figure.

There was a unanimous and detailed understanding of what he was instead, which we have summed up with the word ‘everyday’. He is ‘*nice*’ and ‘*reasonable*’, has no ‘*bad characteristics*’, and is talked about in synonyms of ‘*decent, caring, compassionate*’. Lest we convey someone saint-like, we need to point out that there are negatives, such as being ‘*harmless*’ or ‘*benign*’, that were equally pointed to. Corbyn is the worker who could be relied upon to ‘*muck in*’ with everyone else, and above all someone who is ‘*consistent[ly]*’, comfortably and unashamedly themselves (for better or worse). There was no doubt that people saw such qualities as starkly different to what previous and alternative leaders have modeled. That he was also high risk and potentially unlikely to win or succeed was equally articulated. Respondent after respondent told us ‘*it could all go wrong*’ or ‘*he wasn’t going to win*’ or reflected on ‘*the negative side of it*’, a person who couldn’t or wouldn’t be the traditional leader figure. Such reserve would please critical leadership scholars who warn against romanticizing any leadership (Collinson et al., 2018).

Ironically perhaps (given the first respondent in the above table), we need to recognize Corbyn as a ‘*uniquely charismatic figure*’ with an anti-charisma that challenges our exclusive focus on ‘discredited heroics’ (Ford et al., 2008; Wood, 2005:1102) and one who creates inclusion through articulating dissent (Gagnon and Collinson, 2017). We will pick up such a prospect in our discussion but for now we note that Corbyn’s personal characteristics alongside his propensity to play the roles of a channel, focal point and rupture seem to mean he never becomes entirely an establishment leader nor detaches himself fully from a resistance ethos. Instead his actions and symbolism help his supporters occupy, navigate and articulate that liminal passage between resistance and power – breaking through a relational crisis with the past status quo and building towards an alternative future. He seems to act like

a potent symbol/marker whose presence does work – and is put to work – in the anti-establishment discourse and actions of his followers.

While recent studies of leadership (e.g. Sutherland et al, 2014) allow for a leadership actor, regardless of position, to be able to mobilize others, their reading may miss some of the symbolic and connective functions of leaders as presences who help focus anti-establishment feeling and movements. Such leadering can be attributed to an entangled co-constitution of the character of the leader, the projections of his/her supporters, and the broader socio-political circumstances that are conducive to such leadering (in our case, a bucking against perceptions of the previous establishment). Such entangling is the hallmark of *leadership*, as opposed to leader, foregrounding the apparent need for a leader-figure in resistance leadership (a presence) but for such figures to act as ‘channels’ for alternative beliefs and practices (an absence).

Next we want to emphasize how supporters avoided the reification of their leader by engaging in practices that ensured that the development of democratic and participative structures did not remain the sole ‘responsibility’ of the leader (Ganz, 2000).

Organizational redrawing

Our second narrative component proposes that dramaturgical resistance leadership involves rethinking an organizational site with a radically different structural shape. We have called this the redrawing of organizational boundaries, which is constituted by porousness, diversity and fragmentation/dispersion. Such redrawing rejects previous organizational logics and instead clears the way for a transition from oppositional resistance to power. Redrawing is a creative practice that generates, but also dwells in, liminality, signaling a visible and radical redefinition of the organization itself. Within this newly drawn liminal space, a range

of new and dispersed leaders can emerge, neither dispensing entirely with the category of leader nor accepting the more traditional need for *a* formal leader (Gronn, 2002).

The reconfiguration of the Labour Party during this era has been well noted. An avalanche of new, mostly Corbyn-supporting members, estimated in the hundreds of thousands (Klug, Rees and Schneider, 2016), joined a conventional formal party structure largely dominated by more centrist and longstanding party members in order to vote for their preferred leadership candidate; this was a deliberate strategy from Corbyn’s team of reaching beyond the existing party membership to create a new electorate, many of whom had no existing involvement with political parties. Accordingly, a number of intra-party or affiliated groups were created or re-imagined, of which the ‘leftist’ organization Momentum is the largest and most high-profile. Such groups played a number of roles, including leveraging direct support for Corbyn through mass participation, pursuing overall party reform, creating events, and providing platforms for policy and future-orientated discussions. They brought ‘hybrid’ forms of leadership that spliced together different modes of coordinating in creative and unusual ways (Gronn, 2009). The impact of this influx of new members, and more importantly their hybrid forms of distributed leadership, succeeded in changing the fabric of the party. At its most foundational level this was a significant change in the very nature of organizing itself as shown in table 6:

Table 6: Hybrid ways of Organizing

Hybrid Organizing
<i>‘There’s a very, very clear cut political theory of change, which is based on changing the party, changing the balance of the power in the party, and doing that by kind of winning key positions in internal elections, parliamentary selections, party reform, and stuff like that, organizing in quite a kind of disciplined way...Then on the other hand there are the newer people who came in when Jeremy became the leader, who are often more influenced by other trends, including kind of ‘movementist ideas’, or the idea of like building the movement, but also through particular kind of NGO-based networks; new economy organising networks.’</i> [senior leader]

'We had regional phone banks in every major city and then, in addition to that, we had this phone app, had a website where people could host pop-up phone banks in their own homes or community centres or cafes or whatever, and there was a bit of an experiment and a lot of people were a bit sceptical about it...It was quite influenced at first by the Bernie Sanders stuff that was going on, and I remember hearing people, like, it's, kind of, an American thing to do, right, invite people you don't know round to your house...We had hundreds of these pop-up phone banks, and I think that was really – that was actually very uplifting'.

[mid-level leader]

'I actually think that our structure – the structure that we now have...is more appropriate for the type of organization we want, than what would essentially be a democratic centralist structure, you know, which is actually more controlling than the structure that we have, which essentially creates autonomous space for people to do what they think is important, and it allows them a great deal of autonomy, you know, and it gives space for us to display our pluralism in action.'

[mid-level leader]

The three respondents above represented an understanding throughout our interview sample of the contemporary structure as some kind of hybrid between a party and a social movement, with the experience of trade union organizers and veteran leftist campaigners mingling with an influx of new activists – a truly liminal space in other words. Such a space decreased top-down delegation, and accelerated more bottom-up engagement (Collinson and Collinson 2009). This was a shift in the *'balance of power'*, as *'movementist ideas'* and *'pluralism'* filtered into more normative organizational structures. The first respondent is able to articulate a *'very clear-cut political theory of change'* which integrates formal organizational change processes (*'internal elections'*) but also *'the building of a movement'* which is driven more by what the third respondent calls *'autonomy'* and *'pluralism in action'*. As the second respondent states, there was an experimental ethos to the hybridity of the campaigns, with new techniques and technologies designed to enhance and decentre the movement adopted and accepted by the more orthodox campaign 'centre'. Hybridity in the campaign also meant a porousness between *'inside'* and *'outside'* that brought a whole new leadership resource into the Labour Party as table 7 speaks to:

Table 7: Porousness during campaigning

Porousness
<p><i>'The people who thought Momentum shouldn't be affiliated to Labour, and those who thought it should be affiliated to Labour, so whether it was an outward campaigning organisation to the public or an inward Labour Party organisation. As it's transpired it's become more of an inward one...it's more embedding a set of ideas as best you can in interplay with other groups who are attempting the same thing.'</i></p> <p>[local leader]</p>
<p><i>'We had more success as a group in just trying to be a place to discuss those ideas and take them forward within the Labour Party, because Labour in the end has a principal focus on winning elections, and it seems to me that the organizations that link into it are the ones where discussions about politics actually happen.'</i></p> <p>[local leader]</p>
<p><i>'I was, sort of, a bit involved in some of the UK Uncut [an anti-austerity social movement organization] actions a few years ago, after the, like – 2010 election, so yes, I've, kind of, always been on the peripheries of different things...Whilst I recognized that the Labour Party was the lesser of two evils, or the better option, absolutely, I never felt particularly inspired and I didn't really think about the Labour Party very much, to be honest...The, kind of, lesser of two evils, the slightly nicer face of the establishment, I guess, you know, the smiling face rather than the grizzling face. After the 2015 election defeat, a friend of mine said they'd just joined the Labour Party and I genuinely remember thinking, what a strange thing to do.'...</i></p> <p>[mid-level leader]</p>
<p><i>'But what you're seeing also is people...certainly even more since the second leadership election, Momentum activists around the country or people who are new to politics getting involved in Momentum, getting active in their [local parties], getting into positions wanting to become councilors. And I think we're seeing a whole new breed of leaders, people who previously would have found mainstream politics just inaccessible or disempowering or unappealing.'</i></p> <p>[mid-level leader]</p>

From its beginning in 2015 the Corbyn campaign realized its path to victory lay in redrawing the boundaries of the electorate – and therefore also the party itself. Hence, young people whose previous experience had been at the *'peripheries'* of social movements were targeted and drawn into emergent, 'distributed forms of leadership' (Gronn, 2002; Alvesson and Spicer, 2012). Such people had a more distanced relationship to the party and had made a relational break with it (*'lesser of two evils'*, *'what a strange thing to do'*), but the campaign's intentionally porous approach identified them as potential allies. The three respondents above

use a variety of terms to speak to the porousness of inside and outside, such as ‘*outward campaigning organization*’. This porousness drives and maintains liminality and creativity within this space: there is an ‘*interplay*’ in such a structure that draws in new resource (‘*a whole new breed of leaders*’) and creates different forums (‘*a place to discuss ideas and take them forward*’). However, we see that even when resistance leadership moves towards more deliberative leadership practices (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012), collective deliberation about how to exercise authority may not yet have taken place. Thus, while there is an expansiveness and excitement to such porousness, what accompanies the hybrid form of distributed and deliberative leadership practices are fragmented and dispersed power dynamics, as table 8 shows:

Table 8: Fragmentation/Dispersion

Fragmentation/Dispersion
<p><i>‘The majority of the parliamentary party is, at best, unconvinced, and at worst, actively hostile to Jeremy’s leadership...And the majority of the party officials, I suspect. You know, the party as a whole hasn’t been captured by the left, by any stretch of the imagination. But then, you know, 70% of the current membership joined the party after 1st January 2015. And clearly the vast [majority] joined to support Corbyn.’</i></p> <p>[senior leader]</p>
<p><i>‘There are loads of leaders and there are loads of different pools of power within the movement, from people specifically in Jeremy’s office, in the trade union movement, in different parts of Momentum, the national office, the local groups. People who are in Momentum but aren’t that active in Momentum per say, but they’re active [elsewhere], and stuff like that. There’s a lot of diffused leadership going on, which is important.’</i></p> <p>[senior leader]</p>
<p><i>‘In any of these kinds of movements you have centres of influence and power, but the power comes from the constituency they represent and what that means. You’ve got union supporters of Jeremy, you’ve got Momentum as an influential force, you’ve got people within the parliamentary left, you’ve got other groups that have been around longer.’</i></p> <p>[senior leader]</p>

This table draws attention to the fact that even after victory, Corbynism itself had to deal with widespread resistance, given a substantive part of the more formal party structure

was *'at best, unconvinced, and at worst, actively hostile'* to Corbyn and his policies. The dispersion and fragmentation of the leadership within Corbynism was therefore seen firstly as something that reflected the porousness and egalitarian mindset of the campaigns and secondly as indicative of the resistances the new leadership now faced from those formerly in power. Given resistance to them was coming from within and across party structures, that meant that the left faction needed, not so much a dismantling of the notion of leaders, but a more dispersed form of leadership, with *'loads of leaders'*, *'different pools of power'* and *'diffused power'*. This communal orientation that can ensure an organization's survival matches other CLS work that has also emphasized relationality and where the construction of social meaning is the key to a politically acephalous form of collective meaning-making (Sutherland, et al., 2014: 764).

Putting together the changes inherent in hybrid organizing, porousness and fragmentation/dispersion, we can see that Corbyn did not merely inherit an existing party but additionally created a new one from a patchwork of various centres of power and an influx of new talent. Rejecting the very notion of an 'organization' and building a new one in the image of the resisting movement appears a crucial leadership task, intentionally stoking the creativity that may appear in liminal and hybrid configurations. Such a re-creating in our case, however, was far from complete or uniform, with older, established structures, personnel and caucuses working alongside diffuse, plural groups and people who inhabited dynamic boundaries between the Labour Party and other outside social movement groups.

Trifold Focus

Such a blurring can be seen in our final narrative component, which presents concurrent and at least partially competing imperatives driving leadership attention and activity as groups seek to transition from resisting to power: seeking to maintain power

through conflict with remnants of the former status quo but also building new forms of *communitas* that seek to progress and embed change. A perhaps surprising finding was that resisting/resistance remained a strong imperative well into a Corbyn and Momentum era, foregrounding the role of conflict in resistance leadership beyond the initial moments of relational crisis, as table 9 shows:

Table 9: Resisting

Resisting
<p><i>'So, well, for a long time, it was all about resisting. You were constantly resisting, so it was a resistance leadership, undoubtedly. Well, you know, you pick yourself up from the last battle and think of what the next attack was going to be and prepare yourself for it and counter it and sometimes you'd win, and that would be great. You'd have a victory.'</i></p> <p>[local leader]</p>
<p><i>'Momentum is a lot more than resisting, you know. We've actually got to promote positive ways of reforming the party. We've got to drive it.. It's not going to be driven from the leader's office, unfortunately.'</i></p> <p>[local leader]</p>
<p><i>'Labour was in Government [in the past] so it perceived that things worked and you don't need to be distributing power or having initiatives at grassroots level...so, I think those things sort of shut down the ability to like influence or change things going upwards. But now that we're not in power it needs to be really different. But there seems to be a resistance, like, whether it's bureaucracy or...I suppose, yes, the Labour Party, you know, was established in a very different time and a different era.'</i></p> <p>[mid-level leader]</p>

Having secured the leadership, the left faction faced a series of ongoing battles and resistances from other sections of the party – resisting policy emphasis, elections of internal party representatives and attempts to ‘democratize’ the selection of future party leaders and elected representatives. Maintaining a focus on resistance and conflict therefore seemed essential for our respondents and as an aspect of collective leadership dispersed throughout the movement – via higher profile national campaigns but also piecemeal skirmishes locally throughout the country. The ongoingness of resisting is articulated through *‘all about*

resisting, *constantly resisting* and words indicating movement such as *next attack*, *pick yourself up* and *prepare for it*. The third respondent makes sense of this continued emphasis on resistance in the context of structures, personnel and practices that pre-date Corbyn and the sense that as long as the old *bureaucracy* from a *very different time and a different era* persists, the resistance ethos of the Corbyn leadership campaigns must continue. Resisting in a nutshell seems continuous and ongoing, though intertwined with *reform* and other foci, including the ones in this section of subduing and generating. This brings to mind the notion that resistance needs to be understood as a constant process of adaptation, subversion and reinscription of dominant discourses (Thomas and Davies, 2005). We differentiate resisting and activities of dissent and opposition from what we call subduing in table 10:

Table 10: Subduing

Subduing
<p><i>'It's an organization that is actually out of control, largely, and has a, kind of, dynamic of its own, and actually, you can only change the party apparatus from the top. I mean, I think you can do it from the top by using, you know – Jeremy's strength is, of course, at the bottom.'</i> [local leader]</p>
<p><i>'It's the grassroots, and so you can exercise control from the top by using the power from the grassroots, but you have to use that power to control the [governing body] to replace the general secretary, to replace the top layer of bureaucracy, to change it from the top. I mean, I say that's the only way.'</i> [local leader]</p>
<p><i>'We've got to focus on reforming the party from the grassroots, you know, from the bottom up as well as from the top down, as long as we've got the leadership, but if we lose the leadership, you know, we've got to use the positions. We've got to still get people to the National Executive. We've got to fight for every position. We've got to fight to win control of local parties. We've got to fight for candidates.'</i> [mid-level leader]</p>

Subduing refers to outright acts of eliminating, replacing and eroding what is existing and further magnifies the conflictual. We differentiate subduing from resisting because it

requires the integration of power, intent and planned action in a concerted act of control or domination often seen as a form of ideological hegemony (Fleming and Spicer, 2014). In the extracts above, subduing is repeatedly linked to the replacement of key positional leaders ‘to change the party apparatus from the top’, ‘to replace the top layer of bureaucracy’, and to ‘fight to win control of CLPs’ and so on. While resisting appears to at least involve the grassroots (*‘It’s not going to be driven from the leader’s office, unfortunately’*), subduing is more often indexed to top-down, positional power (*‘you can only change the party apparatus from the top’, ‘change it from the top, it’s the only way’*). We note an aggression in the discourse (*‘we’ve got to fight’*) and the intent to replace structures at both ends of the hierarchy from respondents interested in ‘gaining control’. This is quite different to the generating imperative that was prioritized by other members as illustrated in table 11:

Table 11: Generating

Generating
<p><i>‘In the World Transformed [left Labour festival of ideas] we have wide ranging debate, you know, sometimes people taking quite – very radically different positions, strong arguments, sometimes quite controversial things being argued. We don’t have a vote at the end and people celebrate that we’ve had these debates in a comradely fashion. Some of the people rather than allowing this team of people who actually organized the World Transformed to actually decide for themselves what they think is important, to organize in a fairly autonomous way, they want to monitor everything.’</i></p> <p>[senior leader]</p>
<p><i>‘I think that’s an exciting bit, it’s a really exciting project where on the one hand the change in the party and then on the other hand the change outside the party. So, communicating those values and those policies effectively within society and working with other movements and organizations and groups. And get tapping into different communities to try and, yes, to look outwards and inwards which as a dual purpose has been in tension at times.’</i></p> <p>[mid-level leader]</p>
<p><i>‘If we’re going to succeed in the long run, we have to be proactive and offensive, not defensive and, you know, unfortunately, that applies to lots of different areas, not just democratizing, reforming the party structure, or driving for left policies. It’s also, actually, getting people out, campaigning on issues that matter’.</i></p> <p>[local leader]</p>

These respondents noted the compelling '*distraction*' (senior leader) caused by the focus on resisting and subduing, meaning that attention could be drawn away from mass engagement and the generation of new ideas and campaigns through the building of *communitas*. Such struggle is viewed by the first respondent in the table in relation to the '*festival of ideas, the World Transformed*', which was established initially as a parallel alternative party conference but has since spread across the country in a series of one-off events to engage people in ways that reach beyond the instrumental focus on winning elections. Even here we see the pull of resistance manifesting where '*some*' people wanted to apply logics of control that the senior leader felt would hamper the generation of radical ideas. There is a strong pattern of generative verbs across these utterances ('*communicating*', '*tapping into*', '*reforming*', '*getting people out*'), which point to activity that is '*really exciting*' and '*proactive and offensive*'. There is a sense here of needing to reach out externally to be liberated from a stifling internal focus. Within a trifold focus, therefore, generative, *communitas*-building practice co-exists amongst conflictual resisting and subduing demands. Letting go of any of these seems unwise to the longer-term sustenance of the leadership but allowing one practice to dominate over others is recognized by respondents as an ever-present danger. Thus, as noted in the literature, while the three resistance leadership practices generate ambiguity and contradictions in terms of the nature of leadership (Thomas and Davies, 2005), they are also recognized as integral parts of the whole.

Discussion

Putting our three narrative components - anti-establishment leadering, redrawing organizational boundaries and trifold focus - together, enables us to delineate a set of practices that hold some promise in crafting a trajectory from resistance to power without

succumbing to the seductions of becoming yet another status quo. Thus we not only seek to better understand the capacity of resistance to bring about productive change but also ask it to develop the ability “to identify its own injuries” (Courpasson, 2016: 99). Given the emphasis on the emergence of new leadership from situations of disorder or uncertainty, and the non-predicted shifts in positions of power and organizational boundaries, resistance leadership remains a creative balancing act that calls for “combining and switching between the performative and critical positions” (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012: 368). Such a balancing act forms the basis of what we term a dramaturgical resistance leadership framework. We define this framework as the performative (doing) and critical (critically questioning the doing) mobilization of social interactions across changing organizational boundaries that rework an organization’s sense of itself and its leadership, foregrounding ongoing cycles of generative practice and conflict between individuals, groups and stakeholders. Such a definition reframes resistance leadership from a leader-centric bias to a focus on contingent leadership actors distributed throughout the organization, accentuates bottom-up relational dynamics in liminal spaces, legitimates internal and external collectives as parts of the core, and highlights dissent, conflict and tension between ‘new’ and ‘old’, unitarist and pluralist ideals, as an ‘engine’ or driver of ongoing resisting across all stages of the acquisition (or not) of power.

It is at this point that we return to the three research questions to better unpack the meaning of the above framework, connect it to the resistance leadership and SDA literatures and draw out its implications beyond our case. In fact if we start with Turner’s SDA theory, we should note that, on the surface, it appears to hold a pessimistic view of the sustaining of resistance, given its progression of crisis, redress and schism and its reliance on conflict as the driver of the ongoing drama of social life (Turner, 1974). At the same time, SDA offers a space of possibility in its incorporation of *communitas* and liminality (Turner, 1969), spurring us to

move beyond a leader-focus to draw across the fuller theoretical terrain of collective and critical leadership theorizations (Alvesson and Spicer, 2012; Sutherland et al., 2014). The British Labour Party has supplied a narrative with “a nuanced view of reality” (Flyvbjerg 2006: 223) to direct such questions towards, particularly in terms of insight we can glean from leadership between Turner’s relational crisis and redress phases, a space that seems to offer potential for radically different practices and identifications. It is the identification of such a space and recognition of its possibilities that drive our construction of the dramaturgical resistance leadership framework.

We firstly asked: *‘How does this case illuminate the relationship between leaders, leadership and resistance?’* In answer our case offers the insight that both leader and leadership are interdependent and necessary for symbolizing, building and then holding an oppositional stance in any movement from resistance to power. This might be considered somewhat unexpected given that ‘leader’ and ‘leadership’ do tend to occupy positions at different ends of the ‘leading’ continuum, hence largely polarizing the scholarly community. Our case respondents narrated a complex picture of a figure (Corbyn) and his refusal (inability?) to occupy a normative leader role in favour of symbolizing and holding a space for multiple leaders and a distributed leadership ethos. We titled this ‘anti-establishment leadering’ to highlight both its resistant nature and the existence - but deferral of – the individual leader within it. The notion of a symbolically salient anti-establishment leader would seem key in transitioning from resistance to power without replicating the status quo. The noun ‘leader’ thus transitions to the verb ‘leadering’, marking the phenomenon of leaders acting as symbolic signifiers with whom the previously marginalized members make sense of their values and purpose. In terms of the contradictions and ambiguities of resistance leadership practices, we therefore do not encounter a complete rejection of hierarchical

notions of leadership (Barker, 2001) even though hierarchical positions are being replaced in this case with more democratic forms (Sutherland, et al., 2014).

While acknowledging that leader-figures clearly remain important within a resistance leadership logic, we also question the conventional attribution of charisma or charismatic qualities to such resistance symbols and propose an ‘anti-charisma’, ‘anti- hierarchy’ and ‘anti-establishment’ stance of the resistance leadership actor. We note that while Turner himself (1974) warned of the rise of charismatic authoritarians, he did not explicitly foresee the emergence of leadership actors offering an anti-charisma of the sort we have identified, designed not to dominate but to step forward so as to draw others into the leadership space. This experience of the anti-charisma of the leadership actor is evident in our case study in the creation of spaces for collaboration and influence that channel alternative beliefs and practices. In that sense, like charismatic leadership (Boal and Bryson, 1988), anti-charismatic leadership too seeks to create or represent a new world that is valid, real and different from the one before. However, the anti-charisma leader’s exceptional qualities and attributes are interpreted negatively by certain sections of the community and thus that community responds with resistance rather than obedience (Whisker, 2012). In the case of the anti-charisma leader, there is also an absence of pervasive positivity that is typically found in the dialectical dynamics between the charismatic and their adoring followers (Collinson, 2011), with an acknowledgment of the risks associated with backing such a radically different kind of leader.

Hence we seek to embed the leader in processes of leadership to a degree we argue that neither mainstream nor critical leadership literatures have sought to do to date. At the same time we have aimed to redefine *what* leader is *to* leadership. Our case study has offered us a sustained view of someone occupying a leadership position with the primary purpose of

holding and protecting a space for the overall distributed dynamics of leadership to be radically redefined organizationally. In effect we are proposing that the promise of such dynamics relies on someone concurrently filling *and* disappointing/deferring the expectations of such a role. Therefore it is Corbyn's anti-charisma that appears to disrupt both his own leader identity but more significantly the leader identification/fantasies of other distributed leadership actors. We argue that such a counterintuitive leadership actor holds some promise of breaking out of what is a classic trap in resistance studies of seeing the replacement of one leader by another as an accomplishment in itself. Instead we are positing the replacement of leader by another form of leadering altogether as the accomplishment that resistance might need to seek.

Our second question asked: '*How does resistance leadership transition from marginality to power without becoming the new status quo and/or replicating what it seeks to overthrow?*' Our case primarily answers this by highlighting the importance of sustaining a space of ambiguity through what SDA refers to as *communitas* and *liminality* during the resistance to power transition. In his conceptualization of *liminality* (a non-structural state) Turner discusses the importance of tolerating and maintaining ambiguity, as its presence allows members to re-evaluate the structural and relational aspects of their organization, and to make mutual adjustments. However, unlike the SDA framework we are not proposing that the hierarchical social structure will naturally change through the experience of *communitas* (Sinha, 2010). Such change may not occur in the absence of an anti-establishment type of leadering. Here, our case explains how the ambiguity created during the transition from marginality to power and Corbyn's leadering seems to generate opportunities for the kind of collective and deliberative leadership processes highlighted in the CLS literature (e.g. Alvesson and Spicer, 2012). Further, because occurring within a framework of *liminality*,

such deliberative forums may offer more radical egalitarian possibility, addressing some concerns in this area of study that democratic and collective forms of leadership may be co-opted or manipulated to enhance the status and power of individual leaders (Collinson et al., 2018; Smolović Jones et al., 2016; Sutherland et al., 2014).

Building on the ambiguity experienced during the liminal state (Turner, 1968, 1974), we suggest supporters/non-supporters of this type of resistance leader can never be fully confident of the chosen alternative leader and the non-authoritarian leadership practices that they represent and legitimize, where even the supporters express doubts as to whether their leadering can indeed deliver the transition from marginality to power. More recent developments in relation to Corbyn's navigation of the Brexit question in a Labour Party significantly divided in its allegiance to the European Union (EU) suggest that such ambiguity can reach crisis levels in periods of heightened political turmoil, so we need to acknowledge that ambiguity, liminality and *communitas* can have negative as well as positive effects on resistance leadership.

Inviting ambiguity is a complex answer to give, we concede, so we offer something more tangible in the redrawing of organizational boundaries. In effect here we are stating that it is not enough to change the nature of leadering in itself without also seeking fundamental structural changes to the organization or network. The redrawing of organizational boundaries therefore significantly addresses our second research question of how resistance can become power without reverting to a tried and true leadership, the status quo. We know how acts of dissent from below can re-constitute how organizations view and approach problems and, in the process, challenge and reframe power relations (Grint, 2005).

However, in contrast to this inquiry, resistance studies have generally assumed that the organizational structure remains largely stable and at most the leader of the resisting enclave may be invited to join in a position of power (Courpasson et al., 2012). Equally, Turner allows for concession, creativity and alternative forms of articulation, particularly during times of relational crisis, but primarily envisages outsiders as organizational ‘elders’ who, with a view to maintaining the status quo, may seek to placate resistance that desires leadership change.

Organizational membership is thus assumed to stay largely stable, even when a few of the leadership figures and platforms change. Indeed, if anything the literature has emphasized the tendency of resistance to dissipate and for resisting actors to depart (e.g. Thoroughgood et al., 2012). Hence, Turner and the resistance leadership literature tend to assume, implicitly or otherwise, that acts that challenge established leadership, organizational practice and norms occur within existing organizational boundaries that are mostly stable.

The present work provides a means for exploring how, through acts of resistance leadership that build from grassroots and distributed forms of leadership, organizations can be redrawn and values recreated. Resistance leadership as redrawing evokes an understanding of emancipatory, productive and potentially transformative change at a deep structural level, where the boundaries of the resisting structure, and therefore also the organization, expand. Thus, we propose researchers study how the organization is redrawn (i.e. contraction-expansion of its membership and boundaries) during resistance, as this redrawing may partially explain whether resistance transitions to power.

Our case analysis also shows how actors external to organizational boundaries significantly influence resistance. Forms of contestation which had become marginalized and

contained within the organization are connected to bigger and broader strains of external resistance, thereby, if sustained, redrawing the boundaries and identity of the organization. We therefore highlight the purposeful crafting of such redrawing as critically important. In terms of SDA, our narrative suggests that resistance leadership's ability to survive and indeed move from marginality to power is enhanced when the legitimacy of its emerging 'leader' and the alternate form of leadership that resistance factions seek are firstly recognized by external stakeholders and secondly strengthened by collective acts of resistance leadership emerging beyond an organization's boundaries. It is this porousness between internal and external participation that enables resistance leadership to reach a turning point where its communal voice becomes more powerful than that of former leadership figures. To return to and confirm our critical roots therefore, we argue that leadership change is no substitute for deep structural change and that if resistance is to claim power, it needs to pursue both. We even speculate that the predilection for changing leaders has, intentionally or otherwise, masked the need to profoundly interrogate and rethink organizational structures - something that both scholars and practitioners have been largely complicit in. So while our dramaturgical resistance leadership framework does propose substantive change in leader and leadership processes, we would argue such changes can only be sustained if accompanied by attention to structure. These changes are some of the most difficult to sustain, as we recognize "the tendency and culturally prevalent expectations to revert to hierarchical, leader-centric forms of guiding organizations" (Salovaara and Bathurst, 2016: 1).

The implications of connecting leadership, structure and redrawing organizational boundaries can also be seen in the dynamics of political organizations on the opposite end of the ideological spectrum to Corbyn's Labour Party. For example, during 2019 the transitioning of the UK Conservative Party towards a 'hard' form of Brexit has undoubtedly

been informed by an increasing porousness between that party and the nationalist hard right, latterly in the form of Nigel Farage's Brexit Party. Previous party boundaries – of voters and members – seem liquid, with a liminal space between the two emerging from a relational crisis generated by a perceived inability of the Conservatives to deliver on a referendum result to leave the EU. However, while Corbynism and Corbyn at least ostensibly promised a pluralist form of leadership, we note a more authoritarian leaderism emerging from the relational crisis of the right. What this counter-example illustrates is that resistance leadership may take alternate paths within and beyond relational crisis and that emergent forms may vary according to the level of frustration with the status quo and the underlying ideology of the resisting organization. Future research might explore resistance leadership on the right of the political spectrum in more depth or even analyze the intersection between competing resistance leaderships of the left and right, both of whom claim strong anti-establishment discourse and affect.

Our third question asked: *'What practices will aid resistance leadership as it seeks to challenge the status quo while assuming power?'* The narrative component of trifold focus, with its dimensions of resisting, subduing and generating, speaks in particular to this question and the identification of practices that enact movement from resistance to power. Here we need to grapple with the complexity of being between resistance and power and the 'tyrannical' (Bloom, 2016:1) seduction of replicating inherited power structures. Whereas Bloom (2016) views the dialectic of power-resistance as one to be rejected and moved beyond, in contrast we theorize a triality of practices that does not entirely reject the pull of power-resistance but following Turner recognizes the dangers inherent in not building a *communitas*-driven form of leadership within it. Our analysis expands and extends current understanding of the dialectics of control and resistance (Collinson, 2005; Zoller and

Fairhurst, 2007; Mumby, 2005). Here we suggest a subtle change of focus from contradictions to co-emergence of contradictory practices. The resisting practices focus on replacing status quo ideals, generative leadership practices forge towards co-creating a radically different future form, while subduing practices are a blunter means of asserting positional dominance. Hence, even as the resisting faction becomes more successful at cementing power, we do not theorize a complete ascendancy of unitarist goals, rather the emphasis gradually shifts towards generative practices. In that sense, power is used both as a negative force that silences dissent and more positively to institutionalize alternative norms (Fleming and Spicer, 2014). A trifold focus therefore conveys the leadership challenge of transitioning from marginality to power, recognizing power-resistance logics without succumbing to any one of them. Navigating such a balance is undoubtedly a creative leadership task, perhaps typical of the kind Turner viewed as constitutive of liminality.

In discussing the dynamics of resistance leadership, Turner's SDA proposes that any established structure will produce revolutionary strivings for renewed *communitas* from those who find the new status quo stifling (Turner 1969). Likewise, implicit in our notion of a trifold focus are hints of a cyclical dimension to resistance leadership, that today's resisting subjects become tomorrow's status quo, with roles and power dynamics shifting and even reversing. Indeed, there are hints of such a cyclical movement in the emergence of a new grassroots movement in the UK to reverse the process of Brexit, with the campaign to remain in the EU cutting across previous party loyalties and undercutting Corbyn's appeal to his supporters. Further research is required to explore the potential for viewing resistance leadership in cyclical terms. In particular we perhaps need to allow more time to pass to determine whether the emerging anti-Brexit resistance will be capable of, or even desires, radical ideological, organizational and leadership change beyond its current single-issue

focus. Even were Corbyn to leave his leadership role imminently, at present it seems likely that a form of Corbynism, with its now embedded sense of *communitas* and dispersed emergent leaders, would persevere, albeit with a more pro-EU hue. Further, were a cyclical reading to hold, we might compare the current impasse with more isolated events in the recent past, such as the Iraq war and austerity, as moments that built towards a broader movement of resistance leadership, developing potential future leaders, rather than acting as their immediate and sole catalyst in the shorter-term. Future research might therefore seek to unpack in more depth the responses and tactics of displaced leadership groups, exploring the struggles enacted as they seek to regroup and rebuild.

In terms of broader implications, first, while our inquiry has focused on a political party, we strongly feel there is much for other organizational contexts to learn here. Our dramaturgical resistance leadership framework invites organizations to seek radically different leadership actors and not merely to replace one with a similar other. Those figures will not necessarily be Corbyn-like at all but they will need to reframe how people understand leadering so as to recreate a leadership dynamic with the capacity to redistribute leadership differently. Eliding the salience of leader-figures may mean replicating many of the power dynamics resistance movements seek to overturn even if the intention of resisting groups is distinctly anti-leadership (Sutherland et al., 2014). Changing power dynamics means changing the structure, moving the boundaries, and creating different relationships within and across internal and external stakeholders. Not every organization will benefit from explicit invitations to redraw organizational boundaries through relatively open voting processes but most will be implicated in a network of complex stakeholders, relationships with whom may offer creative possibilities for re-imagining the nature, purpose and scope of

an organization. This case narrative strongly suggests organizations learn to see such possibilities as core leadership resources.

Second, the case narrative brings SDA to life in relation to a contemporary organizational setting and offers insight into how resistance leadership practice may need to protect, utilize and learn from conflict as an ongoing process. Conflict was present at every point in this narrative; in the qualities and roles of Corbyn himself, the balancing and relating of the different organizational partners and parties and the concurrent resisting, subduing and generating imperatives and activities that constituted the practice of this dramaturgical resistance leadership. SDA teaches us that social progression relies on conflict and SDA's gift to resistance leadership is that it cannot afford to let go of its dissenting, resisting and conflictual nature or it risks either losing its distinctive offer or unintentionally succumbing to replicating the very dynamics it resists. We accept these are not easy answers for any organization but we submit that maintaining the presence of conflict through a radically different resistance leadership holds promise for changing something about leadership at a more foundational level. For example, one obvious change would be that leadership is no longer deemed to manifest in 'expressive harmonious collectives' (Collinson et al, 2018) – unitary groups and the notion of a unitarist organization would be increasingly challenged in leadership studies and its practice. In fact we would go further in asserting that the current loosening between leadership and resistance and the over-emphasis on universal and transcendent truths about leadership be balanced with more studies that seek a deeper understanding of their association with change, status quo challenging intent, and emancipatory possibilities. Leadership development too has become increasingly complicit with establishment and compliance expectations, however research suggests resistance to such normative control is enacted through participants' anti-hierarchy practices and views

that contradict the homogenizing impact of the prevailing regime (Gagnon and Collinson, 2017). Hence SDA's confirmation of conflict as the driver of organizational dramas and cycles should offer a means for reclaiming resistance leadership as needing to orientate at times to being profoundly disruptive and unsettling of what comfortably exists. Our dramaturgical resistance framework contributes to a deeper understanding of the processes, practices and structures that ultimately explain how resistance leadership fundamentally and incrementally shapes "homes for anti-structural visions, thoughts, and ultimately behaviour" (Turner, 1974: 293). By recognizing that they may choose to outwardly and temporarily 'adjust to the new reality' rather than escape organizational boundaries via schism, our framework offers a critique of SDA's prioritization of consensus and harmony and questions the neglect of more dormant forms of dissent as part of the ongoing dynamics of power and conflict in organizations.

Finally we propose that our framework speaks to some of the more puzzling contemporary trends and dynamics we see in both political and organizational contexts. We note we are seeing a raft of political leaders - Trump, Johnson, Farage, and Zelensky - who break the mould of what has been traditionally understood as appropriate in national leaders and in inspiring peculiar amalgamations of love and loathing. We observe new intersections between corporate, public, NGO and social movement spheres that do redraw the boundaries of organizing with the promise of fueling alternative and more collective/distributed leadership processes – for example, municipally owned energy companies, worker-owned businesses and a resurgent co-operative movement. Lastly we note instances of sustained and even permanent sites of resistance that gain traction and consolidate power. Examples of this phenomenon would include the 'hacker' or 'whistleblowing organization', such as WikiLeaks, which resists both state and corporate power (Munro, 2016).

Conclusion

In integrating Turner's SDA insights with a critical approach to the leadership literature, we have theorized how resistance leadership may transition from a position of marginality to one of power without becoming the establishment. We have constructed a dramaturgical resistance leadership framework and offered three practices: 'anti-establishment leadering', 'organizational redrawing' and 'trifold focus' as salient, particularly between the mini-dramas of relational crisis and redress, where resistance either folds or morphs. It is on these practices that the consolidation and transformation of resistance leadership into power may depend.

The bigger question of 'so what' however can be addressed on three levels. Firstly we seek to re-orientate resistance from its current interest in 'non-compliant behaviours within the status quo' towards 'practices that seek to counter or create alternative realities to the status quo'. That re-emphasis does not reflect a judgment that non-compliance is not worthwhile or important but does reflect a frustration that, as leadership and organization scholars, we are not theorizing or empiricising emancipatory possibilities in relation to contemporary examples and therefore risk (unintentionally) diminishing the horizon for genuine change. Secondly, we are cognizant that critical studies of resistance are too comfortably following the binary logic of mainstream and critical leadership studies in an 'either/or' logic concerning leaders and leadership. Our Corbyn/Labour narrative invites us view a leader as interdependent with a broader leadership dynamic and as a signifier of how leadership might be shared, distributed and connected (or not) beyond them. In this way leaders and leadership can be framed, not as alternative or complementary, but as co-constitutive. Finally we seek to break down the remnants of dichotomy that persist between resistance and power through positioning them as mutually embedded. SDA has provided a

template for doing so in terms of its reliance on conflict. We have sought to fashion tangible pathways between resistance and power through offering a leadership framework that emphasizes some of the concurrent practices involved. But we also offer a challenge for leadership studies and practice to understand themselves as an intersection of resistance and power. Here we have illustrated that ambiguity, liminality and *communitas* provide an under-examined set of resources to connect the two.

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