

Navigating complexity with motivational interviewing: implications of change talk strategies for leadership educators in communities of practice

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper investigates the change talk (CT) strategies of the motivational interviewing (MI) technique and their relevance in achieving change goals within communities of practice (CoP), focusing on addressing real-world problems in today's complex world.

Design/methodology/approach – We employ a literature review and conceptual analysis to study the interactions and potential areas of complement between CT, MI and CoP theories.

Findings – This paper combines CT, MI and CoP theories to develop an integrated model called Facilitative Change Talk Leadership (FCTL).

Originality/value – This paper provides an innovative model (FCTL) to inform leadership educators about facilitating communities of practice. We provide a hypothetical case study to suggest how FCTL might foster collaborative inquiry and resilience amidst complex challenges. This case study illustrates a practical pathway for leadership educators and community practitioners to use this model in their own contexts.

Keywords Communities of practice (CoP), Change talk (CT), Facilitative change talk leadership (FCTL), Motivational interviewing (MI)

Paper type Conceptual paper

Introduction

Contemporary organizations focusing on cultivating Communities of Practice (CoP) have become increasingly common (Schule, 2021). We argue that utilizing this framework to help navigate complexity in today's volatile environment shows great promise for creating coherent spaces that facilitate human flourishing. Lave and Wenger (1991) developed CoP as a social learning theory that represents interactive groups sharing a common passion for attaining future goals. For example, Health Care Systems Research Network (HCSRN) and Academy Health created a voluntary forum (CoP) where experts from different disciplines gathered to share information and discuss innovative approaches to address the COVID-19 pandemic (AcademyHealth, n.d.). Such types of CoPs contribute to shaping leadership practices due to their distinctive learning capacities (Schule, 2021; Wenger *et al.*, 2002). Despite the strong contributions a CoP is shown to have, studies (Baker & Beames, 2016;

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Probst & Borzillo, 2008) also show oversights and limitations when interaction diminishes among members. Further, studies (McDonald *et al.*, 2012; Tarmizi, de Vreede, & Zigurs, 2007) identified various facilitative challenges, such as a lack of members' participation toward the timely goal attainment within the CoP. We argue that this suggests a need to explore the Change Talk (CT) strategy of the Motivational Interviewing technique (MI) to improve the usefulness of a CoP.

MI is a cognitive-behavioral method that helps individuals make positive life changes (Miller & Rollnick, 2013) by focusing on establishing relationships with individuals through integrity, acceptance, listening, and compassion. This strategic framework (Miller & Rollnick, 2013) includes a number of researched approaches to achieving coherent relational communication. One of these is MI Spirits (*Collaboration, Compassion, Acceptance, and Evocation*), leader's dispositions when interacting about change (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). These MI Spirits are grounded in person-centered therapy (Rogers, 1965). For example, the attribute of unconditional positive regard (valuing individuals for who they are) is consistent with the MI Spirit of *Acceptance* (accepting the absolute worth of individuals) (Csillik, 2013). Similarly, MI Principles are strategies that foster leaders' way of being to build a collaborative relationship (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). These MI Principles are grounded in key social psychology theories:

- (1) Self-efficacy: one's confidence to achieve a specific outcome (Bandura, 1977a, b) — which informs MI Principles of *Rolling with Resistance* and *Supporting Self-efficacy*
- (2) Accurate empathy: active interest in understanding others' feelings (Rogers, 1957) — which informs MI Principle of *Expressing Empathy*
- (3) Cognitive dissonance: restoring decisional balance by enhancing consistency between beliefs and behaviors (Festinger, 1957) — which informs MI Principle of *Developing Discrepancy*

To help express MI Spirits and Principles, leaders use OARS Skills (Open-ended Questions, Affirmation, Reflective Listening, and Summaries), which are interpersonal communication skills (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). OARS Skills were developed from clinical approaches applied with substance abuse (Miller, 1983) and further informed by interpersonal communication theory (Gordon, 1970). While reflective listening helps to express empathy, and affirmation helps to express positive regard (Miller & Rollnick, 2013), ultimately, the technique is only as effective as the practitioner versed in using it. Leading a group ultimately requires empathy for different views and the direction of a group rather than imposing a personal agenda (Wagner *et al.*, 2013).

These MI Spirits and Principles are used in tandem with OARS Skills to engage with individuals in helping them express their Change Talk (CT). CT is recognized as an autonomy-supportive communication practice (Miller & Rollnick, 2013; Shorey, Martino, Lamb, LaRowe, & Santa Ana, 2015). It promotes conscious listening and motivates change rather than instigating it by evoking Desire, Ability, Reasons, Need, Commitment, Actions, and Taking Steps (DARN-CAT) to achieve desired change goals (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). Recognizing and eliciting CT is a central practice of the MI technique (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). It is rooted in theories such as self-perception (identifying change attitudes by helping individuals recognize the meaning of their behaviors) (Bem, 1972) and psychological reactance (motivation to regain one's agency (Brehm & Brehm, 1981). CT uses various change-eliciting strategies to facilitate the desired changes, such as asking *Evocative Questions*, *Developing Discrepancy and Decisional Balance*, and *Exploring Value and Goals* (Miller & Rollnick, 2013). These are also rooted in social psychology theories. For example, *Discrepancy and Decisional Balance* is drawn from cognitive dissonance theory (Festinger,

1957). Recent studies (Arbuckle *et al.*, 2020; Erichsen & Tolstrup, 2013; Wilcox, Jenkins, & Kresh, 2017) show CT is evolving as a leadership practice. CT may provide insight into both the formation and coherence of cultural group phenomena, such as a CoP.

Implications of
change talk
strategies

The purpose of this paper is to explore how CT may contribute to facilitating a CoP to achieve change goals. This paper covers relevant concepts throughout three main sections. In the first section, we discuss the social and theoretical framework supporting a CoP idea followed by a second section that describes CT. In the final section, we interweave the two concepts in a model called Facilitative Change Talk Leadership (FCTL) that expresses how they complement each other to encourage a CoP member's acquisition of change goals. Further, we provide a case study example with a hypothetical Equal Justice Group to show application and implications of the FCTL for facilitation and leadership education. Facilitative Change Talk Leadership (FCTL) contributes to the body of knowledge in leadership education by adding to strategies for goal attainment with coherent relational communication that is person-centered and contextualized with unconditional positive regard. Interrelated contemporary issues in organizations and society increasingly require a diversified spectrum of leadership approaches that blend strategic approaches with positive dispositions and change talk toward shared learning and goal attainment. FCTL is a novel proposed model for facilitating goal attainment and a tool for leadership educators and students alike.

Theoretical background of communities of practice

The social nature of human learning in communities is often the basis for the evolution of social learning theories. Some social learning theorists identified communities as the foundation for behavioral learning (Bandura, 1977a, b) while social constructivists argued that knowledge-sharing attitudes of individuals evolve in the communal and social environment (Cobb & Yackel, 1996). In 1988, cognitive anthropologist Jean Lave published the book *Cognition in Practice: Mind, Mathematics, and Culture in Everyday Life*, which discussed how cognition of learning evolves in real-life settings, where individuals are situated to learn and resolve problems in everyday activities (Lave, 1988). These perspectives laid the foundation to build a CoP theory, introduced in 1991 when Lave and educational theorist Etienne Wenger collaboratively published the book *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. From this, situated learning was conceptualized in that learning occurs in a social relationship at the workplace, which is supported by Lave's ethnographic study about how Vai and Gola's tailors learn and solve math, in Liberia, West Africa (Lave, 1977). Lave and Wenger's (1991) claim that informal gathering and social interaction between novices and professionals contribute to constructing the professional identity was supported by Brown and Duguid (1991) demonstrating the application of a CoP theory in an organizational setting, which identified that individuals' informal interaction in the workplace contributed to professional identity and collaborative problem-solving. Likewise, Orr (1996) studied the usefulness of "occupational CoP" in an organizational environment where the informal interactions of Xerox technicians helped to discover solutions to machine malfunctions.

In early 2000, Wenger (2000) organized the CoP social and theoretical framework into three features—domain, community, and practice—to encourage organizations to adopt CoP as a tool to achieve specific organizational goals. These three features are developed as follows:

- (1) Domain — the shared interest that differentiates them from other groups.
- (2) Community — the relational interactions between members that facilitate learning.
- (3) Practice — building resources and ideas to sustain the community's common goal.

Shared knowledge is enhanced when these three dimensions operate collaboratively in a CoP. However, if any of these elements and their ethics are dysfunctional, it may impact the overall health of a CoP to achieve its common goal. With this understanding, [Wenger et al. \(2002\)](#) authored *Cultivating Communities of Practice*, which suggested that organizations can cultivate CoPs to enhance their competitiveness. These discussions shaped the contemporary CoP definition: “a group of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or a passion about a topic and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in this area by interacting on an ongoing basis” ([Wenger et al., 2002](#), p. 4). [Wenger et al. \(2002\)](#) argued that CoPs differ from teams or workgroups in that their membership is voluntary, goals are less specific, and results are not easily discerned. A CoP can be identified with different names, such as strategic communities ([Kodama, 2005](#)), brand community practices ([Schau, Muñiz, & Arnould, 2009](#)), and organizational CoP ([Kirkman, Cordery, Mathieu, Rosen, & Kukenberger, 2013](#)).

CoPs rely on facilitative leadership

Several authors identify the role of the facilitator as a significant element of CoP’s success and failure ([Baker & Beames, 2016](#); [McDonald et al., 2012](#); [Probst & Borzillo, 2008](#)). The facilitator (also referred to as a leader) holds a leadership position ([Li et al., 2009](#); [Wenger et al., 2002](#)). Though the responsibilities of facilitators vary across organizational settings ([Li et al., 2009](#)), a facilitator is a person who leads a CoP by engaging them in a dialogue to achieve their shared goals. For example, a CoP in Hill’s Pet Nutrition Facility in Richmond, Indiana, includes line technicians and managers who informally meet weekly to discuss recent successes, frustrations, and challenges ahead ([Wenger & Snyder, 2000](#)). The members of this CoP select a “mayor” to monitor weekly meetings and ensure that people with relevant expertise are present to address conflict. The facilitator was found to help the members reach common change goals in a timely manner.

Facilitators play a crucial role in cultivating an organization’s ability to exercise shared learning, commitment, and innovation to reach a common purpose ([Li et al., 2009](#); [Tarmizi et al., 2007](#)). [Wenger et al. \(2002\)](#) identify seven principles for cultivating a CoP through two aspects of leadership: interaction and goal attainment (refer to [Table 1](#)). For example, in the first principle, *Design for evolution*, the role of a CoP facilitator/leader is to build rapport and cultivate a cohesive culture among members of a CoP. Although contemporary organizations

Table 1.
Principles for
cultivating a CoP

| Principles (Wenger et al., 2002) | Emphasis on leadership Interactions | Goals attainment |
|--|--|---|
| Design for evolution | To draw the potential of members to build rapport | Build cohesive culture |
| Open dialogue between inside and outside perspectives | To develop active participation | Create a floor for one on one and a group discussion |
| Invite different levels of participation | To strengthen individual relationships and networking | Acknowledge the perspectives of all members |
| Develop both public and private community spaces | To encourage Problem-solving conversation | Utilize spaces as a conformable environment |
| Focus on Values | To engage them in conversation to recognize their values | Shape member’s values and their contribution to the community |
| Combine familiarity and excitement | To shape excitement and information sharing | Thrivers for common adventure |
| Create a rhythm for the community | To keep a community alive and motivated | Develop flow in member’s interactions |
| Source(s): Wenger et al. (2002) | | |

are increasingly focusing on cultivating a CoP, the research around facilitators remains relatively new and limited. We argue that facilitators enhance a CoP by directing individuals to make a consensus decision to support their shared goals and build a cohesive culture.

Studies identify a CoP's success as dependent on the facilitator's wide range of leadership skillsets, including listening and clarifying, creating a positive environment, developing and asking the right questions, encouraging multiple perspectives, building rapport, and keeping goals and outcome-focused mindsets (Tarmizi *et al.*, 2007). These CoP leadership skillsets enhance motivation and knowledge sharing (Zboralski, 2009), improve members' participation (Hildreth, Kimble, & Wright, 2000), discover members' potential (Tarmizi *et al.*, 2007), and align group thinking to foster a common purpose (Pyrko, Dörfler, & Eden, 2017). Although the facilitator role is vital within a CoP, various studies show leaders often lack these necessary skillsets (Baker & Beames, 2016; Probst & Borzillo, 2008; Tarmizi *et al.*, 2007). Based on the aforementioned studies on CoP facilitation, a CoP may benefit from a strategic leadership framework, such as Change Talk (CT), that consciously aims to evoke individual strengths as they work to achieve change goals and/or make decisions in an interactive environment.

Change talk

In this paper, we integrate CT and CoP to guide leadership educators in advancing a CoP to better operate in contemporary environments facing unpredictable and dynamic challenges. The theory of CT is a pedagogy of dialogue that can be described as a language of change (Miller & Rollnick, 2013), which values listening and evoking individual interaction to learn and act with self-awareness toward their desired change goals. CT facilitates collaborative inquiry about ambivalence, intentions, cultural dynamics, conflicts, sharing expertise, and passions to address a specific problem or issue (Arbuckle *et al.*, 2020; Erichsen & Tolstrup, 2013; Wilcox *et al.*, 2017). Such collaborative inquiry may enhance members' interactions to shape social closeness, shared identity, negotiation, and conflict resolution; this directs individuals to make a consensus decision to support their change goals. In a CoP, CT provides a facilitator with a concrete process to accelerate the group's movement toward a coherent vision, shared strategies, and achievement of common goals. We argue that CT is exceptionally well suited to enable dialogue in a CoP setting.

The root of change talk

Although the CT strategy is evolving as a facilitative leadership practice, its roots are underpinned within the framework of MI. Recent scholars (Arbuckle *et al.*, 2020; Erichsen & Tolstrup, 2013; Wilcox *et al.*, 2017) reveal that one way to facilitate a complex group setting (such as CoP) is through the CT strategy, an autonomy-supportive communication practice of MI (Miller & Rollnick, 2013; Shorey *et al.*, 2015).

In 1983, Miller introduced MI as a conceptual framework for working with problem drinkers. MI is developed based on Miller's clinical experience and gained insights from various aforementioned social psychology theories. According to Miller (1983), "MI is an approach based upon principles of experimental social psychology, applying processes such as attribution, cognitive dissonance, and self-efficacy" (p. 147). In 1991, Miller and Rollnick developed MI as a technique for cognitive behavioral change to treat substance misuse and addiction disorder. Since its original publications (Miller, 1983; Miller & Rollnick, 1991), this technique evolved with various Spirits, Principles, OARS Skills, and, most importantly, the practice of CT (Miller & Rollnick, 2002, 2013). CT is recognized as a central practice of the MI technique that focuses on the context of change by emphasizing what individuals desire instead of why they lack the motivation to achieve it (Resnicow & McMaster, 2012; Shorey *et al.*, 2015).

Later, [Miller and Rollnick \(2013\)](#) highlighted the link between MI, leaders, and organizations. In this context, MI is defined as “collaborative, goal-oriented...communication with particular attention to the language of change... to strengthen personal motivation for and commitment to a specific goal by eliciting and exploring the person’s own reasons for change within an atmosphere of acceptance and compassion” ([Miller & Rollnick, 2013](#), p. 29). Within MI, a facilitator avoids motivational traps (such as blaming and imposing personal agenda) and uses CT as a non-confrontational practice to guide individuals toward their desired change goals ([Marshall & Nielsen, 2020](#); [Miller & Rollnick, 2013](#)).

[Erichsen and Tolstrup \(2013\)](#) explored the MI framework in organizational settings and identified CT as a helpful leadership practice that could be applied in various contexts, such as a CoP. Most recently, [Wilcox et al. \(2017\)](#) supported authors’ ([Erichsen & Tolstrup, 2013](#)) claims about CT’s usefulness in enhancing individuals’ capacities in organizations. Several recent studies focused on understanding MI in executive coaching ([Harakas, 2013](#)), transformation leadership ([Sumpter, 2019](#)), and resilience improvement ([Roy, 2017](#)). This literature on MI laid the foundation for exploring the link between CT and a CoP, two prospective subjects that have not yet been investigated together.

The process of MI change talk

The concrete process of CT (refer to [Table 2](#)) is composed of three dimensions: conscious listening to DARN-CAT, strategic facilitation methods, and ethical/relational skillsets to

| Change talk (ways to listen consciously) Listen to DARN - CAT | Methods for eliciting change talk (ways to facilitate strategically) Elicit change by (for example) | MI leadership disposition (ways to facilitate ethically) | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| | | Spirits | Principles | OARS skills |
| Desire to change | Asking Evocative Questions | Collaboration (Mindset of Honoring) | Expressing Empathy (Stand in their Shoes) | Open-ended Questions (Evocative) |
| Ability to change | Asking for Elaboration and Examples | Compassion (Mindset of Selflessness) | Developing Discrepancy (Examine Current Values and Future Goals) | Affirmation (Appreciation) |
| Reasons to Change | Using Change Rulers | Acceptance (Mindset of Respecting) | Rolling with Resistance (Encourage Different Points of View) | Reflective Listening (Mirroring) |
| Need to change | Developing Discrepancy and Decisional Balance | Evocation (Mindset of Discovering) | Supporting Self- Efficacy (Enhance change Belief) | Summaries (Transmuting) |
| Commitment to change | Consult Thyself and Hypothetical Change | *Supporting Autonomy (Mindset of Avoiding Motivational Traps) | *Offering Support (Cultivating Hope) | – |
| Action to change | Exploring Goals and Values | – | – | – |
| Taking steps to change | Building Self Efficacy | – | – | – |
| Source(s): Miller and Rollnick (2013) | | | | |

Table 2.
MI change talk

promote interactions, knowledge sharing, and consensus-building within a CoP. The following sections give a basic understanding of MI Change Talk in a CoP and will be exemplified and contextualized in the discussion section, “An Example: Equal Justice.”

Implications of change talk strategies

Conscious listening to change talk (DARN-CAT)

In a collaborative learning atmosphere (for example, in CoP), individuals express DARN-CAT when they are ambivalent about change or intent to pursue their change goals. The Desire, Ability, Reasons, and Need (DARN) are “preparatory” CT (Miller & Rollnick, 2013) toward change goals. Here, the role of the facilitator is to listen to DARN and move the group to express “commitment language” (Miller & Rollnick, 2013) to achieve their desired change which comprises CAT (Commitment, Action, Taking Steps). A facilitator has to consciously listen to DARN-CAT and then deliberately respond using change-eliciting methods to encourage individuals to move from preparatory to commitment CT.

Strategic methods for evoking change talk

Change-eliciting methods suggested by Miller and Rollnick (2013) aim to consciously facilitate individuals' CT that leads them to present their deep commitment to desired change goals (Marshall & Nielsen, 2020). For example, in a CoP, simply by *Asking Evocative Questions*, a facilitator can know why individuals care about the specific challenge. Once they express DARN, the leader can prompt them by *Asking for Elaboration and Examples*. This allows individuals to verbalize their concerns or ideas with specific examples and the facilitator to recognize their deep emotions regarding the specific problem. These insights encourage the facilitator to continue to explore their deep values by using various methods. One method is *Developing Discrepancy and Decisional Balance*, which helps individuals recognize the inconsistency between the current situation and future goals, as well as their own ideas and the ideas of others.

MI leadership disposition/skillsets

Change Talk (CT) is underpinned by the framework of Motivational Interviewing (MI), which provides a range of ethical/relational dispositions (Arbuckle *et al.*, 2020; Marshall & Nielsen, 2020; Miller & Rollnick, 2013) called Spirits which the leader maintains to build a collaborative environment. MI Spirits are made of:

- (1) *Collaboration*, which is building mutual understanding and social closeness with the group
- (2) *Compassion*, which is recognizing difficult emotions and taking care of the overall well-being of individuals
- (3) *Acceptance*, which is acknowledging the value of the group for who they are and what they hope to change
- (4) *Evocation*, which is drawing out group motivation and change resources rather than imposing them
- (5) Additionally, we included a Spirit of *Supporting Autonomy*, which is avoiding motivational traps such as blaming and judging. This ethical aspect was discussed by Miller and Rollnick (2013) but not explicitly recognized as one of the Spirits.

These Spirits aid in encouraging individuals to engage in a shared conversation to achieve desired change goals. MI Principles are strategies that a leader applies as needed to further dialogue. These Principles include *Expressing Empathy* (emotional relatability), *Developing*

Discrepancy (goal inconsistencies), *Rolling with Resistance* (encouraging different outlooks), and *Supporting Self-efficacy* (supporting the possibility of change). These Principles and Spirits support individuals and leaders to develop resiliency to move toward a determined change goal. To drive spirits and principles of MI (Resnicow & McMaster, 2012), facilitators use OARS/Communication skills, which are contextualized as interpersonal skills (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). OARS communication skills represent:

- (1) *Open-ended Questions*, which is reflecting deeply about the issue or change goals.
- (2) *Affirmation*, which is *recognizing* an individual's emotions, strengths, and vulnerabilities through appreciation.
- (3) *Reflective Listening*, which is *mirroring* and articulating emotions to ensure a feeling of being heard and valued.
- (4) *Summaries*, which is transmuting information into focused interaction that moves toward change goals.

Ultimately, the MI leadership framework relies heavily on recognizing Change Talk (CT) and its eliciting strategies. CT expands OARS skills strategically and mindfully applies MI skillsets to lead individuals to achieve change goals.

Discussion

In this paper, we explored Change Talk (CT) and its utility in the context of a CoP. Scholars (Hackney & Cormier, 2009) often encouraged an integrative model to better meet the needs of individuals operating in complex communities such as a CoP. To fully leverage the potential of CT for a CoP, we merged CT and CoP theories into an integrated model, which we call Facilitative Change Talk Leadership (FCTL, refer to Figure 1). We posit FCTL allows diverse individuals with different expertise, values, and cultures to work together to address common challenges. It is guided by a leader who uses CT to promote positive interactions that lead them to build consensus and achieve shared goals. FCTL is not a linear or step-by-step guide but rather a conceptual framework, a context-specific collaborative practice that facilitates individuals' togetherness, including ways of engaging, talking, and thinking to achieve desired change goals promptly.

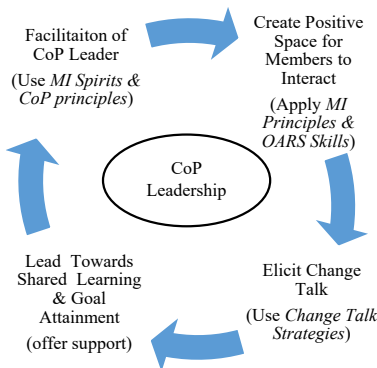


Figure 1.
Facilitative change talk leadership (FCTL) for CoP

Source(s): Figure by authors

In FCTL (Figure 1), a leader can use MI Spirits and CoP principles to create a compassionate atmosphere for members to engage in thoughtful interaction. This allows them to recognize their own culture, including shared stories, inside jokes, laughter, different perspectives, and insightful dialogue around a common goal. This understanding enables a CoP to listen and ask evocative questions for continuous dialogue of CT. Such exchange can be elicited by using CT strategies including *Developing Discrepancy* and *Decisional Balance*, which helps to recognize the inconsistency between their own ideas and common goal. This awareness creates healthy dialogue to present their deep commitment to moving toward achieving a common goal. The role of a facilitator is to offer support and encourage autonomy through listening to DARN-CAT and strategically evoking them using various methods of CT. This leads them toward shared learning and goal attainment. It is at the leader's discretion to use these tools as they see fit. In the example below, the tools mentioned above are integrated uniquely to benefit the specific group.

Applying FCTL with an *Equal Justice Group*: Case Example. As Figure 1 shows, FCTL plays a vital role in shaping leadership within a CoP. These qualities are present in the hypothetical group Equal Justice, a voluntary racial justice group that gathers weekly to discuss ways to address race issues in their community and beyond. Individuals in Equal Justice read a book relating to social justice, which offers concrete ways of approaching racial issues, and prompts them to explore change actions. Collaborative reflections bring out individuals' worldviews and perspectives, creating a CoP culture and influencing the change goals they pursue. The culture also reflects personal experiences, political and religious views, social-economic backgrounds, and members' identities.

However, these characteristics challenge the CoP's change interactions, shared learning, and identification. Suppose an individual in the racial justice CoP shares their political perspectives with the group which results in tension or conflict. Leaders can then utilize the tools provided in Table 1, seeking to open a dialogue between inside and outside perspectives to develop active participation from members (Wenger *et al.*, 2002). Creating an impartial rhythm (Wenger *et al.*, 2002) allows the leader to acknowledge members' emotions and transition them toward expressing CT to achieve their change goals; this showcases how CoP principles operate in cultivating an environment for CT.

Because of diverse perspectives in a CoP, FCTL is required to guide the members toward mutual understanding and goal attainment. In the context of the CoP Equal Justice, a difference of opinion can be productive if the leader utilizes MI Spirits to honor members' unique perspectives while bringing them back to the priority of their shared change goal (Arbuckle *et al.*, 2020). Here, a leader can use the MI Spirit, Mindset of Honoring (refer to Table 2) to deescalate the tension between members' views or attitudes. When a leader offers empathetic yet encouraging statements like, "I honor your world views about race, let us talk about it more," it allows members to feel comfortable and valued for their perspectives. Likewise, when a member of Equal Justice expresses deep emotions, such as fear or frustration toward the race issue, the facilitator can use the Mindset of Respecting: "I respect your frustrations; let us discuss." Such change interactions allow members to become more authentic through collaborative discussion and remind them that their contributions are relevant to achieving the shared change goals of the group. When inevitable tensions arise in discussing such complex topics, productive change goals can still be promptly reached.

Simultaneously, leaders can create a compassionate atmosphere using OARS skills: *Open-ended Questions*, *Reflective Listening*, *Affirmation*, and *Summaries* (refer to Table 2). With these skills, a leader urges members to achieve change goals themselves and reaffirms the change goals they desire to meet. By engaging with OARS skills, leaders do not impose but strategically involve themselves in maintaining a progressive flow toward the change goals of the group. When an Equal Justice member expresses conflicting views, the leader can use *Affirmation* skills to encourage them to feel seen and heard while also giving them the room

to feel safe in the group to communicate openly (Marshall & Nielsen, 2020). Affirmations like, “You seem genuine in sharing your opinion,” can help a leader locate the strength and confidence within the member to return to their shared purpose. *Affirmation* legitimizes an individual’s feelings and encourages a CoP member to feel welcomed. A lack of utilizing OARS skills directly impacts a CoP failure because members’ lack of association with the CoP can deter them from focusing on the shared change goal.

We believe FCTL is necessary to achieve change goals or shared purpose. The first step in facilitating dialogue among the voluntary Equal Justice group is to recognize individuals’ DARN-CAT by asking evocative questions such as “Why are you concerned about racial justice?” (“Reasons to Change”), “What resources do we have as a community?” (“Ability to Change”), “What is the urgency in addressing racial issues?” (“Need to Change”). Members’ interaction around these types of evocative questions helps the group recognize the depth of the issue but also helps them verbalize their concerns through their own stories. For example, Alex expresses that racism in his community dehumanizes his neighbors from different racial backgrounds. Joy shares that one of her friends got targeted recently and is afraid this type of act increases hate and violence in her community. The facilitator draws their thoughts, experiences, and ideas to direct them to express action statements: “How might we address racism in our community? What are some of the steps you might want to take?” (“Action and Taking Steps to Change”). Reminding members, through evocative questions, of the group’s specific goals in the context of their own perspectives and values allows members to redirect their focus to identify those change goals again. This encourages members to narrow their focus collectively and navigate toward their change goals. It is most effective to encourage the redirection of members toward their desired change goals rather than direct the CoP in a specific way. Leaders should be mindful of offering their ideas and only ask questions to help advise the group based on their needs. This builds self-efficacy for reaching change goals which increases members’ likelihood of attaining them promptly.

Further, a facilitator’s role is to listen to DARN-CAT and evoke them strategically using various change-eliciting methods. This occurs by continuously facilitating individuals’ CT, leading them to present their deep commitment to achieving desired change goals, including resolving ambivalence (Marshall & Nielsen, 2020; Miller & Rollick, 2013; Wilcox *et al.*, 2017). When a CT theme emerges, like racism, change-eliciting methods (refer to Table 2) suggested by Miller and Rollnick (2013) may be used to elicit DARN-CAT. For example, a leader can evoke individuals’ reasons for desired change by developing *Discrepancy and Decisional Balance*. In Equal Justice, a leader can ask: “What are the benefits of addressing race issues in our community? What are the consequences of not addressing it?” Situations arise where a member struggles with their own perspective or critiques those of others.

These are opportunities for the leader to elicit CT by *Exploring Values and Goals*: “What values are most important to you, and how are they related to desired change goals?” This way of eliciting CT allows a flow of conversation for members to reflect upon and acknowledge other perspectives, even if they are different or conflicting. Uniting members’ differences toward a common goal and simultaneously listening and evoking CT requires the facilitator to maintain a conducive learning atmosphere through the application of MI Principles (refer to Table 2) since they cultivate mutual understanding and social closeness to work with and work for a CoP. Similarly, when one of the Equal Justice members expresses ideas to address race issues, a facilitator or members can *Express Empathy* by saying, “I like how you are envisioning solutions, and we would like to hear more.” Alternatively, they can *Roll with Resistance*: “It sounds like you feel strongly about it. Tell us more.”

The above case example provides insights into how FCTL might operate in a CoP such as Equal Justice. In a CoP, the concrete process of Change Talk builds a collaborative environment in which the autonomy of the individuals is respected, and the individuals’ intrinsic resources for achieving a common goal are elicited. A facilitator’s journey with the

group, both as a facilitator and as a member, allows a better understanding of group perspectives and experiences through the medium of MI Leadership Dispositions (refer to [Table 2](#)). These dispositions are a set of Spirits and Principles, evoked using OARS, that create a compassionate atmosphere that promotes CT using various change-eliciting methods. A facilitator may use MI Leadership Dispositions or supplement similar leadership skillsets to inspire, motivate, and support individuals' autonomy to make a change as long as practices applied are natural, unbiased, and ethical as possible; it is a process of interweaving listening and evoking CT. The vitality of CoP depends on FCTL, where a CoP leader purposefully applies leadership skillsets, CoP principles, and communication skills to recognize and elicit members' CT. This enables CoP members to collaboratively inquire about their passions, decisions, and goals in an interactive learning community.

Implications of change talk strategies

Implications

This paper presents the Facilitative Change Talk Leadership (FCTL) model as a promising framework for promoting effective leadership practices within a CoP. While this model is an initial foray into how MI Change Talk develops CoP leadership practices, extensive qualitative or quantitative research is necessary to fully understand its impact and refine its application in different contexts. Such in-depth insights would enable leadership educators to highlight specific aspects and effects of the FCTL model, informing the creation of effective teaching methods, programs, and curricula for their respective academic programs, organizations, and communities.

Leadership educators in higher education can utilize the FCTL model as a teaching pedagogy to facilitate collaborative learning among students who share a common passion or interest. In addition, the FCTL model can be a coaching tool for educators involved with other institutions to guide community members in deepening their sense of purpose and achieving their change goals. This involves creating a positive space for members to interact using MI and CoP principles and utilizing MI principles and OARS skills to elicit change talk and promote shared learning and goal attainment. However, it's essential to recognize that the FCTL model may require adaptation as a CoP, and their goals evolve over time. Given fluid and changing nature of contexts, leadership educators must remain open to the evolving nature of CoPs and their leadership practices and be prepared to adapt and modify their teaching pedagogy accordingly.

FCTL may be adopted by CoP to bolster the effectiveness of facilitation through integration of MI spirits and CoP principles. Facilitators can then use MI principles and OARS skills to elicit change talk and guide members toward shared learning and goal attainment. CoPs that focus on leadership education may require additional strategies to add depth and fidelity of facilitation and learning. In using MI techniques and CoP principles, facilitators can incorporate specific leadership theories and frameworks or integrated applied and experiential learning activities to translate and scaffold to real-world settings.

By recognizing different implications of Facilitative Change Talk Leadership (FCTL) for CoP leaders/facilitators, educators can tailor their approach better to meet the needs of the CoP and its members. By guiding members toward shared learning and goal attainment, the facilitator can help the CoP achieve its objectives, whether it is improving patient care in healthcare, cultivating and executing community projects, or facilitating adaptive change in organizations. Overall, FCTL provides a promising framework for bolstering leadership practices in a CoP. Although further research is necessary to fully understand its process and impact, educators, community development professionals, and organizational leaders can use FCTL as a tool to guide a CoP in promoting shared learning and goal attainment. By remaining open to change and adaptation, leadership educators can continue facilitating effective leadership practices in a CoP across various contexts.

Conclusion and future study

In this paper, we first introduced the concept of Communities of Practice (CoP) and highlighted the importance and challenges of facilitative leadership within a CoP. Second, we discussed Change Talk (CT) and its potential to equip facilitators with a wide range of skill sets to direct a CoP toward change goals. Third, we introduced an integrated model called Facilitative Change Talk Leadership (FCTL), which combines CT and CoP, providing a multidimensional approach to shape and sustain a CoP in today's complex environment.

By embracing the FCTL model, leaders and facilitators can equip themselves with the necessary skills to guide CoPs toward achieving change goals. This approach can benefit leadership educators and community practitioners in various industries, addressing challenges from global crises to local community issues. The FCTL model provides a framework for practitioners to support a CoP in developing collaborative inquiry and resilience to effectively address complex challenges. By working collaboratively and in a structured manner, a CoP can leverage their members' collective intelligence and creativity to develop innovative solutions and strategies.

Future research could conduct pilot studies to investigate the effectiveness of the FCTL model in different contexts and with varied populations. Such studies could assess the FCTL model's impact on CoPs and facilitators' implementation experiences. Additionally, future studies could investigate the FCTL model's effectiveness in creating sustainable change in various corners of society and identify effective strategies for promoting change in diverse cultural and community settings. By conducting pilot studies and exploring the practical application of the FCTL model in different contexts, future studies can provide valuable insights into the model's effectiveness in guiding a CoP toward addressing complex challenges and contributing to meaningful impact across society.

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