A systematic review on organizational empowerment

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to present a systematic review on organizational empowerment (OE) using Peterson and Zimmerman˙s model (2004) as a starting point. The aim is to further conceptualize OE, discover how the components in the model influence each other and identify recommendations for future research.

Design/methodology/approach – All articles that cited the OE model, published in 2004 by Peterson and Zimmerman, have been systematically reviewed. In total, 37 studies of 410, found in Google Scholar and Web of Science, are included in the review.

Findings – The review revealed that intra-, inter- and extra-organizational empowerment affect each other and that evidence for the processes and outcomes on intra-organizational empowerment have increased, but there is limited additional evidence for the other two components.

Research limitations/implications – Literature was searched in two databases, focusing on the OE model. A search using other databases on OE as a broad concept might provide additional sources.

Practical implications – Findings are relevant for professionals, leaders in human service organizations, educators and researchers. Practice can be improved by applying the knowledge; educators can use the results in their program and researchers may use the findings for the further development of OE.

Originality/value – Since the OE model was presented in 2004, no systematic review has been performed. Therefore, this review contributes to the further conceptualization of OE.

Keywords Empowerment, Organizational theory, Systematic review, Organizational empowerment

Paper type Systematic review

Introduction
"Empowerment is an active, participatory process through which individuals, organizations, and communities gain greater control, efficacy, and social justice" (Peterson and Zimmerman, 2004, p. 129). Empowerment encompasses the individual, organizational and community levels. Empowerment on the individual level refers to the belief in one's own strengths and power to influence the environment and gain mastery over one's own life (Zimmerman, 1995). Organizational empowerment (OE) refers to "organizational efforts that generate individual empowerment among members and organizational effectiveness needed for goal achievement" (Peterson and Zimmerman, 2004, p. 130).

Until 2004, most empowerment research has been focusing on the individual level, studying what empowers members. This creates a bias, namely, that individuals are solely responsible for their outcomes, without taking the organizational and environmental influences into account. Therefore, to develop empowerment beyond the individual level toward the organizational and community levels, Peterson and Zimmerman (2004) presented the OE model to assess the extent to which organizations are empowered. This is relevant because several studies revealed a relationship between OE and the effectiveness of the provided services and empowerment of clients (Boehm and Yoels, 2009; Laschinger, 2010). In addition, the model creates opportunities for organizations to develop strategies in becoming empowering. Therefore, it contributes to the organizational level of analysis (Franscescato and Aber, 2015). Finally, it also studies organizational effectiveness, its impact on policy, systems and social change (Evans, 2005).

Since 2004, to the best of our knowledge, no systematic review of the OE model has been performed. By gaining an overview of antecedents that influence OE and the relationships between the different characteristics, we contribute to the conceptualization of OE. We chose to review the OE model because it includes the observable characteristics of OE and the relationships between them. It creates the possibility to further study, validate and conceptualize OE. Another reason why we chose the OE model is that it builds up on other studies that focused on OE. For instance, the study of Maton and Salem (1995) identified organizational characteristics to empower community settings, and Zimmerman (2000) took the first step developing a model that studies empowerment beyond the individual level.

This review focuses on the following questions:

Q1. What knowledge and insights have been gained until now, building on the original model of Peterson and Zimmerman?

Q2. Which characteristics can be added to the original model?

This article proceeds as follows. The next section describes OE and its model, followed by the methods and results. In the latter, we make a distinction between findings on the original processes and outcomes, additions to the model and findings that tested the relationships between the characteristics of OE. Finally, we interpret and discuss these findings to draw conclusions including practical implications, identifying recommendations for future research and reflect on limitations.

Organizational empowerment and its model
An important distinction in OE is that it differentiates "empowering organizations" from "empowered organizations." Empowering organizations increase empowerment for individuals (e.g. professionals) within the organization and may not specifically affect the larger context they are part of. Empowered organizations do affect the larger context (e.g. influence of social policy) by focusing on the organizational constructs that are separate and

distinct from the individual level (Peterson and Zimmerman, 2004). Although this distinction was originally made by Gerschick *et al.* (1990), Swift and Levin (1987) and Zimmerman (2000), Peterson and Zimmerman (2004) discovered that the subsequent research mainly focused on "empowering organizations" rather than organizational-level constructs that may be considered as indicative of empowerment.

These constructs are reflected in three components: intra-, inter- and extra-organizational empowerment. Intra-organizational empowerment focuses on cooperation between departments or groups within an organization (e.g. the organizations' structure and culture). Inter-organizational empowerment refers to cooperation between organizations (e.g. by building alliances). Extra-organizational empowerment addresses the organization's influence on the wider context they are part of (e.g. public policies).

Each component of the OE model includes observable characteristics of OE based on processes and outcomes. These processes and outcomes are applied based on the ecological perspective (Kelly, 1966). Peterson and Zimmerman (2004) chose this perspective because it offers an overarching framework on how people and social systems interact:

> [. . .] because it focuses on the interrelationships between individuals and community organizations, organizational-level processes and outcomes within and across organizations, as well as between organizations and the larger environments within which they exist (Peterson and Zimmerman, 2004, p. 131).

Processes refer to the organization's creation of opportunities aimed at giving its members control to achieve individual and collective goals. These are important because they relate to and may affect the degree of empowerment within the organization. Processes can be influenced to gain better outcomes. Outcomes are operationalizations which reflect the organization's efforts to successfully accomplish their mission (Peterson and Zimmerman, 2004).

Method
Search strategy
We searched for studies that cited Peterson and Zimmerman's (2004) original model between January 1, 2004, and December 1, 2018. The start date corresponds with the publication year of the original model. We searched two databases: a) Google Scholar which we chose for its broad scope of both published and unpublished studies and b) Web of Science which is included for its high quality. In total, the search resulted in 410 studies, of which 96 overlapped. From these 96 overlapping studies, we included 34 in the review. In addition, we included three studies that were solely found in Google Scholar. Figure 1 shows how studies were found and in- or excluded.

Study criteria
First, we screened the titles of the studies. If a title suggested that the OE model was used in the study, we read the abstract. If the abstract confirmed the studies relevance to the review, we reviewed the full text. We decided to include full text articles and dissertations that explore, develop or test the characteristics of the OE model. These studies have a theoretical or empirical nature. Theoretical articles test the characteristics of OE or study the relationships between them (e.g. meta-analyses, literature reviews and systematic reviews). Empirical articles report on data that explore the characteristics of OE in a specific practice. Only peer-reviewed English-language articles were included. We excluded all empirical research that merely described something about the specific practice that is studied because these studies do not present new findings on OE.
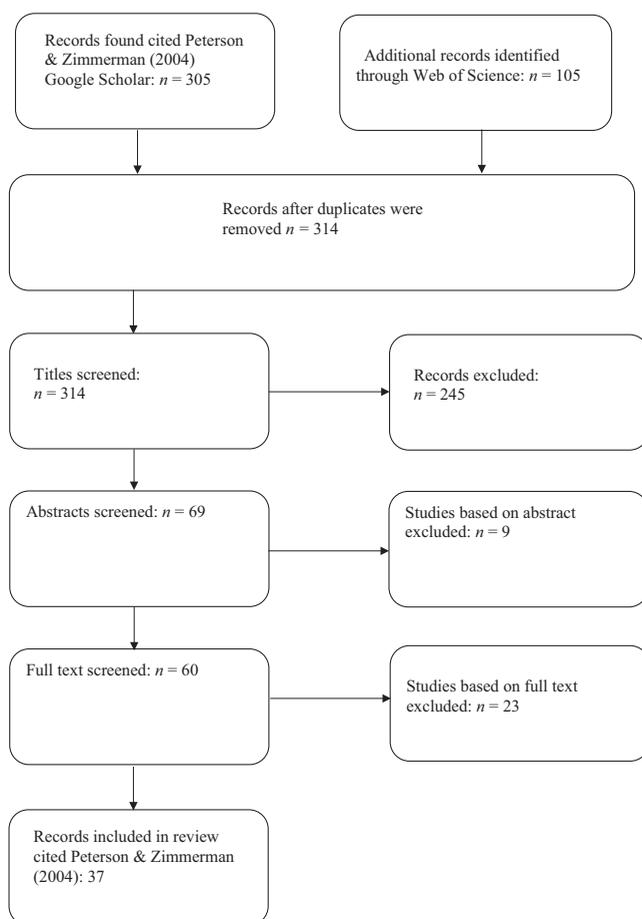
Figure 1.
Flowchart

Description of studies
Table I describes the included studies in chronological order. It shows each study's author, design, setting, population, results and framework, as well as the country where the study was conducted. In total, 19 quantitative, 14 qualitative and 4 mixed-method designs are included. Most studies are executed in the USA (25), 2 in Spain, 2 in Iran and single studies were performed in Australia, Peru and Mexico, The Netherlands, Italy, Sweden and England.

Review of organizational empowerment
Intra-organizational empowerment
Development of original processes of intra-organizational empowerment. Incentive management concerns the extent to which members are facilitated to participate in the organization (e.g. child care) and encourages management to provide development opportunities (e.g. learning new skills) (Peterson and Zimmerman, 2004) (Table II).

Author and year	Research design	Research question	Setting	Sample characteristics/size	Findings	Country	Framework
Yiannakis *et al.* (2006)	Quantitative research: multivariate time series analysis	This study examines whether soccer results could be predicted. A theory of team empowerment is used to explain the utility in predicting the outcomes	Soccer	20 soccer teams of 38 league games from August to May	Team empowerment may lead to individual empowerment	England	OE
Dean and Bush (2007)	Qualitative explorative research	The study examines the psychosocial processes used by environmental organizations in their work	Community psychology	10 government organizations with 22 respondents in total: 12 male, 10 female, age 28-62 years	Community leadership and community pressure play a key role in influencing public policy	Australia	Environmental literature
Griffith *et al.* (2007)	Mixed method: surveys, focus groups, desk research and organizational self-assessment	The study examines how racism manifests itself within organizations	Public health	1 case: The Southern County Public Health Department	Organizations are influenced by external forces such as institutional racism. There is a need of organizational studies and approaches to achieve social change	USA	OE
Perkins *et al.* (2007)	Qualitative research: case study	This study focuses on the role of member participation in decision-making	Non-profit organizations	4 of 16 organizations are local affiliates of a national youth development organization, grass-rooted and a neighborhood association	Learning organizational strategies increase viability, influence community learning and transformation	USA	OE

(continued)

Author and year	Research design	Research question	Setting	Sample characteristics/size	Findings	Country	Framework
Baxamusa (2008)	Qualitative research: case study	The study focuses on examining the role of participatory processes to empower communities	Community practice	2 cases: Los Angeles International Airport and Ballpark Villa	Information contributes to the power of an alliance. Alliances function as mediating structures because they bring issues to the table and may transform them in to social movements	USA	Empowerment
Griffith et al. (2008)	Qualitative research: case study	The study evaluates a coalition's efforts and benefits for individual organizations, partnerships and communities	Youth care	1 case: Youth Violence Prevention Centre in Michigan	Flexibility is important in alliances. Organizations benefit from an alliance	USA	OE
Hughey et al. (2008)	Quantitative research: survey	This study tests the structure of sense of community organizations and evaluates it as a potential organizational characteristic for OE	Community organizations	Total of 661 residents, 561 respondents (59%). 57% female, 56 white, 225 Hispanic, 13% African-American, 9% Asian. 14% age 18-24, 49% 25-44, 23% 45-64, 14% 65+	Sense of community might increase OE	USA	OE
Maton (2008)	Meta-review	The study focuses on how organizational processes influence their wider context they are part of	Adult well-being, youth and locality development, social change	Several youth organizations, community settings, social movement organizations and mutual help groups are included	Opportunity role structure, leadership, group based belief system and organizational learning contribute to OE	USA	OE

Table I.

Table I.

Author and year	Research design	Research question	Setting	Sample characteristics/ size	Findings	Country	Framework
Ohmer (2008a)	Quantitative research: survey	This study examines the relationship between the perceptions of members concerning their neighborhood organization and the effects from participation	Community psychology	231 neighborhood organization members. 54% responded (poverty area). 59% Caucasian, 39% African American. 62% female, 97% voters. Average age 58. 81% homeowners, 49% married, 32% has a professional degree, 18% graduated from college, 25% from a college and 19% has a high school degree or less (6%)	Findings show that whenever a volunteer perceives the organizational characteristics as positive the more control they have on the (local) political level	USA	OE
Ohmer (2008b)	Quantitative research: survey	This study focuses on examining the relationship between organizational characteristics and the perceived benefits by participants in the organization	Community psychology	231 neighborhood organization members. 54% responded (poverty area). 59% Caucasian, 39% African American. 62% female, 97% voters. Average age 58. 81% homeowners, 49% married, 32% has a professional degree, 18% graduated from college, 25% from a college and 19% has a high school degree or less (6%)	Participative organizational characteristics such as decision-making processes, structure and climate are only related to self-efficacy variables such as influence on neighborhood policy	USA	OE

Author and year	Research design	Research question	Setting	Sample characteristics/size	Findings	Country	Framework
Griffith *et al.* (2010)	Mixed method: survey and descriptive case study	This paper describes how community partners of care organizations are able to participate in research to decrease health disparities	Health and youth care	Two example cases. One focuses on intra-organizational empowerment. The other focuses on intra- as well as extra-organizational empowerment	The intra- and inter-organizational component function as a foundation for the extra-organizational component	USA	OE
Javdani and Allen (2011)	Quantitative research: survey	The study examines what factors are positively related to psychological empowerment	Social work	654 respondents from 21 family violence coordinating councils in a Midwestern state were included. 71% female, age 40-59 and white/Caucasian (94%)	Employee participation, effective council leadership and a supportive climate lead to empowerment	USA	OE
Wilke and Speer (2011)	Quantitative research: survey	The study examines how OE characteristics relate to individual empowerment	Community organizations	974 respondents or urban residents	Different types of organizations influence empowerment in different ways	USA	OE
Alcantara (2012)	Qualitative research: interviews	This study examines how the collaboration between universities and community organizations leads to social change	Community organizations/education	20 staff members	Members should have the opportunity to develop their leadership potential. Disseminating information is enhanced through advanced systems	USA	OE

(continued)

Table I.

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Author and year	Research design	Research question	Setting	Sample characteristics/ size	Findings	Country	Framework
Fernando (2012)	Quantitative research: survey	This study focuses to explore the relationship between several intra and extra-organizational empowering processes	Community organizations	78 staff members of a coalition	Extra-organizational processes increase citizen participation	USA	OE
Goudarzvandchegini and Kheradmand (2013)	Quantitative research: survey	This study examines the relationship between OE and organizational commitment	Education	973 respondents	Empowerment among members leads to increased organizational commitment	Iran	OE
Peterson et al. (2013)	Quantitative research: survey	This study evaluates measures and tests the characteristics of mediating variables as predictors of empowerment	Education	423 respondents, 83% female, 9.1% Hispanic, 67.1% Caucasian, 20.4% African American, 4.4% Asian. 45.2% age 25-34, 12.8% 35-44, 2% 55+	Several processes have shown a direct or indirect effect on professionals' empowerment	USA	OE
Powell (2013)	Mixed method: survey and interviews	This study tests OE characteristics in relation to individual empowerment	Community organizations	11 community organizations, 138 survey participants and 20 interviewees. Respondents are primarily female, white, non-Hispanic or Latino	Several findings on SOC, opportunity role structure, social support and group based belief system	USA	OE

Author and year	Research design	Research question	Setting	Sample characteristics/size	Findings	Country	Framework
Prati and Zani (2013)	Quantitative research: survey	The study focuses on the relationship between psychological empowerment and organizational identification	Health organizations	5195 respondents: mean age 46.94, 69% female, 69% nurses, physicians, dietitians, therapists and other health care professionals, 12% technical staff, 19% administrative and 25% managers	Member empowerment increases the identification and loyalty toward the organization	Italy	OE
Segal et al. (2013)	Quantitative research: RCT	This study examines the effectiveness of self-help agencies, community mental health agencies and the role of OE	Self-help agencies	505 respondents: 46% female, 34% African American, 36% White, 30% other	Opportunity role structure increases self-efficacy and a positive attitude towards clients	US	OE
Speer et al. (2013)	Quantitative research: survey	This study focuses on the influence of participation, gender and SOC on PE	Community organization	562 respondents, 67% female, 57% white, 4% Hispanic, 31% African American, 4% other. 4% age 18-24, 20% 25-44, 47% 45-64, 26% 65+	SOC increases the psychological empowerment of employees	USA	OE

Table I.

Author and year	Research design	Research question	Setting	Sample characteristics/size	Findings	Country	Framework
Christens and Lin (2014)	Quantitative research: survey	The study focuses on community and organizational participation, sense of community and social support as predictors of psychological empowerment	Community psychology	1322 respondents: 63% female, 37% male. Age 6% 18-24, 9% 25-34, 10% 35-44, 21% 45-54, 33% 55-64, 17% 65-74, 4% 75+. 94% White, 1.3% Black or African American, 1,2% Hispanic or Latino, 0,9% Asian, 0,8% Native American, 1,7% mixed race	Relational patterns play a role in enabling cross-system empowerment	USA	OE
Christens et al. (2014)	Qualitative research: case study- action research	The study examines how networks of relationships between individuals bridge ecological systems	American Psychological Association	Case study WISDOM. This is an organization that supports and connects local congregation-based community organizing in Wisconsin	Subgroup linkages play a key role in increasing cross-system empowerment and social power	USA	OE
Daraei et al. (2014)	Quantitative research: survey	This study analyses the impact of employee empowerment on Organizational Citizenship Behavior	Insurance setting	152 respondents: 47.4% female, 52.6% male. Degrees: Diploma 10.5%, Higher diploma 11.2%, Bachelor 61.2%, Master 15.8%, PhD 1.3%	There is a positive and significant relationship between empowerment and organizational citizenship behavior	Iran	OE

(continued)

Table I.

Author and year	Research design	Research question	Setting	Sample characteristics/ size	Findings	Country	Framework
Evans *et al.* (2014)	Mixed-method research: case study (action research: observing and interviews) and survey	The study examines the formation of a poverty reduction coalition	Community organizations	1 community organization as leading organization of the coalition was studied. Observations were executed, interviews were held with staff and a survey was conducted to 106 pairs of network organizations	Evidence is found for inter-organizational empowerment	USA	OE
Forenza (2014)	Qualitative research	The study examines pro-social processes in community theatres capable of facilitating the involvement of voluntary members	Community theatre	14 in-depth interviews with theatre members. 8 woman, 4 men, average age 55.6, average years of involvement 33.1, average years of belonging to a theatre community organization 7.6	The study found themes that are indicative for shared beliefs, opportunity role structure, social support and leadership	USA	OE

Table I.

Table I.

Author and year	Research design	Research question	Setting	Sample characteristics/size	Findings	Country	Framework
Neal (2014a)	Quantitative research: hypothesis	This study focuses on understanding empowerment in settings and as relational from a social network perspective	Community psychology	Data are collected in the 7th and 8th grade of a public elementary school. 7th grade included 26 students of which 69.2% female, 8th grade included 30 students of which 40% female. 7th grade 38.4% Latino, 34.6% African American, 23.1% White, 3.8% biracial. 8th grade 20% Latino, 30% African American, 43.3% White, 3.3% Asian, 3.3% biracial	In an alliance, several organizations with a diverse set of empowered processes should be brought together	USA	OE
Neal (2014b)	Qualitative descriptive research: case study	This paper studies when settings are empowering	Education	See Neal (2014a)	A setting can be transformed to empowering by restructuring the relationships	USA	Empowerment

Author and year	Research design	Research question	Setting	Sample characteristics/size	Findings	Country	Framework
Powell and Peterson (2014)	Quantitative research: survey	The study tested the characteristics of coalitions that predict empowerment and effectiveness	Community coalitions	138 respondents: 57.4% female, 3.5% Hispanic or Latino, 90.2% Caucasian, 6.5% Black or African American, 2.4% Asian, 0.8% American Indian or Alaska Native. 35.7% have a bachelor's degree, 34.9% their masters, 11.7% college degree. Mean age is 46	Several processes have shown an indirect effect on OE processes and outcomes	USA	OE
Janssen et al. (2015)	Qualitative research: case study	The study focuses on the organizational features professionals identify as empowering in cooperation processes	Geriatric care	1 multidisciplinary team in a geriatric context	Trust is important in leadership, collaboration between teams increases alliance building, managers tend to prioritize internal affairs above the alliance	Netherlands	OE
Tesdahl and Speer (2015)	Quantitative research: longitudinal design	This study examines how sustained participation in movement activities is affected by organizational activity and equality of staff	Community organization	10,000 respondents in five metropolitan areas in 50 organizations including 47 religious congregations, 2 neighborhood-based alliances and 1 neighborhood association	Opportunity role structure and increasing equality of professional staff may lead to more individual participation	USA	OE

(continued)

Table I.

Author and year	Research design	Research question	Setting	Sample characteristics/size	Findings	Country	Framework
Carrasco et al. (2016)	Qualitative research with a critical realistic approach	The study examines what the role is of CBAC practices in OE	Community-based arts and cultural (CBAC) practices	20 interviews divided in two categories: a) experts/academics non practitioners, b) privileged testimonies	Findings on social support and group empowerment	Spain	Empowerment
Forenza (2016)	Qualitative descriptive research	The study examines which organizational characteristics facilitate empowering processes	Youth Advisory Board leaders	Interviews with 14 Youth Advisory Board leaders. Female $n = 10$, male $n = 4$, age 18-23, 71.4% Black/African-American, 14.3% Interracial, 7.1 Hispanic/Latino, Unknown 7.1%)	Findings on opportunity role structure, leadership and social support	USA	OE
Valsania et al. (2016)	Quantitative research: survey	The study explores the relationship of authentic leadership, and OE	Different types of organizations	212 respondents in Spanish companies	Authentic leadership increases empowerment	Spain	OE
Forenza (2017)	Qualitative retrospective, cross-sectional, research	The study focuses on the role of civic participation among youth aging out of state systems in relation to empowerment	Youth care	10 primary consumers: 60% male, 40% female, white/Caucasian 90%, Hispanic/Latino 10%, Location New Jersey 50%, Massachusetts 20%, California 10%, Florida 10%, New York 10%	Leadership increases organizational commitment, social support and having a group based belief system contribute to OE	USA	OE

(*continued*)

Table I.

Author and year	Research design	Research question	Setting	Sample characteristics/ size	Findings	Country	Framework
Forenza and Mendonca (2017)	Qualitative research	The study explores processes of advocacy	Youth development	In-depth interviews with 5 undocumented, college-age, Latino DREAM act advocates (4 male, 1 female, age 20-26)	Opportunity role structure and leadership contribute to achieve organizational goals. Social support contributes to social capital. Shared beliefs aim at helping a larger community	Peru and Mexico	OE
Ramgard et al. (2017)	Qualitative Action research	The study examines social impact across organizational and geographical scales	Elderly care	7 cases over 8 years in 20 communities	Collaboration between teams in various organizations leads to capacity building	Sweden	Participatory Action Research

Table I.

Component	Processes	Outcomes
Original processes and outcomes of intra-organizational empowerment	Incentive management Subgroup linkages (Christens *et al.*, 2014) Opportunity role structure (Alcantara, 2012; Forenza, 2014, 2016; Forenza and Mendonca, 2017; Peterson *et al.*, 2013; Maton, 2008; Powell, 2013; Powell and Peterson, 2014; Segal *et al.*, 2013; Tesdahl and Speer, 2015) Leadership (Forenza, 2014, 2016, 2017; Forenza and Mendonca, 2017; Janssen *et al.*, 2015; Maton, 2008; Powell and Peterson, 2014; Valsania *et al.*, 2016) Social support (Christens and Lin; 2014; Forenza, 2016, 2017; Forenza and Mendonca, 2017; Powell, 2013; Powell and Peterson, 2014) Group-based belief system (Forenza, 2014, 2017; Maton, 2008; Powell, 2013; Powell and Peterson, 2014)	Viability (Perkins *et al.*, 2007) Underpopulated settings Collaboration between co-empowered subgroups (Carrasco *et al.*, 2016) Resolved ideological conflict Resource identification
New processes and outcomes of intra-organizational empowerment	Team empowerment (Yiannakis *et al.*, 2006) Sense of community (Christens and Lin, 2014; Hughey *et al.*, 2008; Peterson *et al.*, 2013; Powell, 2013; Speer *et al.*, 2013; Wilke and Speer, 2011)	Organizational commitment/ organizational citizenship behavior (Christens and Lin, 2014; Daraei *et al.*, 2014; Goudarzvandchegini, and Kheradmand, 2013; Prati and Zani, 2013)

Table II.
Intra-organizational empowerment

Subgroup linkages are described as the course of action by which groups within an organization are connected to cooperate for reaching organizational goals and increasing growth and effectiveness. They play a key role in cross-system empowerment and social power and are stimulated through listening, reflection and social analysis (Christens *et al.*, 2014; Peterson and Zimmerman, 2004).

Opportunity role structure refers to the opportunities members have to further develop their competences in the organization. This is achieved through activating and stimulating members to address various roles which can be enhanced by activate competition among members, provide organizational niches that members intend to fill, stimulate perceived inclusiveness and provide mentorship (Forenza, 2014; Forenza and Mendonca, 2017; Maton, 2008; Peterson and Zimmerman, 2004).

Opportunity role structure increases self-efficacy and a positive attitude from members toward clients (Segal *et al.*, 2013). It also leads to members' individual participation and attributes to civic literacy (Forenza, 2016; Tesdahl and Speer, 2015).

Leadership affects OE directly by influencing the empowerment of members and indirectly through the empowerment of those who work with them. Leadership should be inspiring, committed, shared and open to expansion. Leaders should have autonomy, acces to- and generate recourses (Maton, 2008). In addition, members should have the opportunity to develop their leadership potential (Alcantara, 2012). Further, building trust and a relationship contributes to members' empowerment and leads to achieving goals beyond expectation (Forenza and Mendonca, 2017; Janssen *et al.*, 2015).

Leadership increases organizational commitment, identification and involvement in the organization (Forenza, 2016, 2017; Valsania *et al.*, 2016). Five themes are indicative of leadership: "a) perils of leadership, b) cultivating a macro perspective, c) dismissiveness toward 'one-and-done' members d) civic mindedness, and e) political advocacy" (Forenza, 2014, p. 559).

Social support refers to the way members experience emotional support when facing challenges they encounter in their work (Peterson and Zimmerman, 2004). Social support positively influences feelings of empowerment, connectedness and being needed and valued (Forenza, 2017). It increases social capital (Forenza and Mendonca, 2017) and facilitates group empowerment (Carrasco, Monferrer and Tarditi, 2016). Six themes are indicative of social support: "a) having a social network, b) having a community as therapeutic space, c) having a community for relationships, separate existing friendships, d) shared experiences and worldviews, e) conscious unsupportiveness among non-members, and f) collective identity" (Forenza, 2014, p. 557).

A group-based belief system addresses the values and culture of an organization whereby desired behavior and outcomes are specified to support members in sustaining goal-directed efforts (Peterson and Zimmerman, 2004). These shared beliefs aim to achieve goals beyond the individual, helping a larger community (Forenza, 2017; Maton, 2008). Three indicators are related to a group-based belief system: "a) values-oriented motivation and b) social motivation" (Forenza, 2014, p. 555), c) the desire to perform and educate (Forenza, 2017).

Additional processes of intra-organizational empowerment. Team empowerment is added because it leads to individual empowerment among members and enables a team to function as a powerful social unit. Further, a collaborative approach in facing institutional and policy barriers positively contributes to team empowerment (Yiannakis *et al.*, 2006; Janssen *et al.*, 2015).

Sense of community (SOC) predicts and contributes to the empowerment of members and is therefore added to the model (Hughey *et al.*, 2008; Speer *et al.*, 2013). SOC refers to the bond a member has with an organization. Wilke and Speer (2011) describe SOC as an outcome of several OE processes, such as social support and group-based belief system.

Development of original outcomes of intra-organizational empowerment. Viability refers to the way an organization creates and maintains legitimacy. It reflects the fundamental quality that indicates whether an organization is functional, provides services and influences communities (Peterson and Zimmerman, 2004). Viability increases when organizational learning strategies are implemented. Organizations with such strategies are more viable in terms of withstanding and coping with changes in the environment. Supportive structures and processes are needed to create organizational learning (Perkins *et al.*, 2007).

Underpopulated settings refer to the active involvement and commitment of members because there are more roles available than people to fill them and generates synergy which is beneficial for the organization's growth and effectiveness. Collaboration between co-empowered subgroups is defined as cooperation between groups to influence discussions in the organization and contributes to shared decision-making (Carrasco *et al.*, 2016; Peterson and Zimmerman, 2004).

Resolved ideological conflict refers to the way organizations react to conflicts that arise because of participatory decision-making processes. Growth and innovation are stimulated when organizations successfully overcome these conflicts. Resource identification reflects the efforts and developments necessary to acquire resources needed to achieve

organizational goals and sustainability. This creates internal alertness, which is a trait of effective organizations (Peterson and Zimmerman, 2004).

Additional outcomes of intra-organizational empowerment. Organizational commitment positively influences the identification and loyalty of members towards the organization and is therefore added to the model (Daraei *et al.*, 2014; Goudarzvandchegini and Kheradmand, 2013; Prati and Zani, 2013).

Inter-organizational empowerment

Development of original processes of inter-organizational empowerment. Accessing social networks of other organizations results in organizational growth. This is a condition to influence the organizations' environment. Participation in alliance-building positively influences collaboration with other organizations and accessing their social networks (Peterson and Zimmerman, 2004). The latter is heavily influenced by the intra-organizational processes of the lead organization. A lack of quality on that level negatively influences the processes and outcomes on the inter-organizational level (Evans *et al.*, 2014; Javdani and Allen, 2011) (Table III).

Important factors in the success of alliances are having a competent coordinator, effective leadership, a positive supportive climate, participation, spreading information, a positive interaction between the alliance and the home organization, a flexible model and building bridges by having outgroup contacts (Griffith *et al.*, 2008; Javdani and Allen, 2011; Neal, 2014a). The latter contributes to creating networks, professional development and collaboration across institutional boundaries which leads to capacity building (Janssen *et al.*, 2015; Ramgard *et al.*, 2017). An entanglement is that managers tend to prioritize internal

Component	Processes	Outcomes
Original processes and outcomes of inter-organizational empowerment	Accessing social networks of other organizations	Collaboration
	Participating in alliance-building activities with other organizations (Evans *et al.*, 2014; Griffith *et al.*, 2008; Janssen *et al.*, 2015; Javdani and Allen, 2011; Maton, 2008; Neal, 2014a; Ramgard *et al.*, 2017)	Resource procurement (Griffith *et al.*, 2008; Neal 2014b)
New processes and outcomes of inter-organizational empowerment	Organizational learning (Maton, 2008)	

Table III.
Inter-organizational empowerment

Component	Processes	Outcomes
Extra-organizational	Implementing community actions (Fernando, 2012)	Influence on public policy and practice (Baxamusa, 2008; Christens and Lin, 2014; Janssen *et al.*, 2015; Griffith *et al.*, 2008; Maton, 2008; Ohmer, 2008a; Perkins *et al.*, 2007)
	Disseminating information (Alcantara, 2012)	Creation of alternative community programs and settings (Maton, 2008)
		Deployment of resources in the community

Table IV.
Extra-organizational empowerment

affairs above the inter-organizational collaboration. Further, empowering settings can be enhanced by reforming them (Maton, 2008) and restructuring the relationships into strategic ones (Neal, 2014b). Overall, the inter-organizational level should be focused on bringing together a range of different organizations with a diverse set of empowered processes (Neal 2014a).

Additional processes of inter-organizational empowerment. Organizational learning increases OE (Maton, 2008) and is therefore added to the model. It refers to the way organizations adapt and respond to environmental changes.

Development of original outcomes of inter-organizational empowerment. Collaboration refers to activities among organizations (e.g. coordinating services and formalizing relationships) which are critical for goal achievement. Resource procurement refers to the acquisition of finances, (e.g. public, staff, resources) from other organizations that contribute to an organization's effectiveness (Peterson and Zimmerman, 2004). Organizations that are part of an alliance benefit from this through financial support and technical assistance (Griffith *et al.*, 2008). It is not necessary for an organization to have the maximum number of relationships possible because it demands a lot of effort in maintaining the relationships (Neal, 2014b).

Extra-organizational empowerment

Development of original processes of extra-organizational empowerment. Implementing community actions refers to events organized by the organization that influence the community. Disseminating information is defined as the circulation of information through the organization into the community which can be enhanced through advanced systems (Alcantara, 2012; Peterson and Zimmerman, 2004). Both processes aim to exert control over the community, its policies and practices (Peterson and Zimmerman, 2004). Overall, extra-organizational processes increase citizen participation whenever members engage in social network activities (Fernando, 2012).

Development of original outcomes of extra-organizational empowerment. Influence on public policy is an outcome of OE because it positively contributes to goal achievement (Baxamusa, 2008; Maton, 2008; Peterson and Zimmerman, 2004). Leadership in and pressure from the community play a key role in exerting influence (Dean and Bush, 2007). Alliances function as mediating structures because they are in a position to bring issues to the bargaining table and may even transform them in to social movements (Baxamusa, 2008). NB: The influence of alliances is limited (Janssen *et al.*, 2008; Griffith *et al.*, 2008).

Participation in the community creates opportunities to influence public policy and practice. Low income groups have less gains in social political control, although they are still positive (Christens and Lin, 2014). Control on the (local) political level increases when the organizational characteristics are perceived as positive. Learning strategies in organizations are likely to influence community learning and transformation (Perkins *et al.*, 2007).

The creation of alternative programs and/or settings influence the community and is therefore an outcome of OE (Maton, 2008; Peterson and Zimmerman, 2004). Deployment of resources in the community an outcome of OE because it positively contributes to goal achievement (Peterson and Zimmerman, 2004).

Overall, Griffith *et al.* (2008, 2010) state that the intra- and inter-organizational component function as a foundation for the extra-organizational component. The first two components facilitate a network of organizations to build community capacity, influence practice and policy.

Testing the relationship between characteristics of organizational empowerment

Several studies focused on testing the relationship between the processes and outcomes of OE. Diversity in management has a strong effect on sense of community (SOC) and access to information has a positive indirect effect on professionals' empowerment (Peterson *et al.*, 2013) which supports the findings of Hughey *et al.* (2008). In addition, increased SOC among individuals leads to increased effectiveness (Powell, 2013). Christens and Lin (2014) reveal that there is a strong relationship between social support and SOC. Further, opportunity role structure has a positive indirect effect and a relatively strong direct effect on SOC (Peterson *et al.*, 2013). Also, opportunity role structure directly predicts perceived effectiveness and indirectly through SOC (Powell, 2013).

Leadership indirectly contributes to effectiveness through opportunity role structure, a group-based belief system directly influences member effectiveness and social support directly predicts the effectiveness of empowerment. Further, members with more opportunities in role structures tend to be more effective (Powell, 2013; Powell and Peterson, 2014). In addition, social support predicts perceived effectiveness directly and indirectly as well as group based belief system (Powell, 2013).

Participative organizational characteristics (e.g. decision-making, structure and climate) are only related to self-efficacy variables (e.g. influence on neighborhood policy). In contrast, the way a member perceives the organization as effective is related to more variables (self-efficacy, collective efficacy and SOC). Therefore, perception is stronger related to empowerment than participation (Ohmer, 2008b).

Conclusions

This article presents findings from a systematic review on OE based on two questions:

Q1. What knowledge and insights have been gained until now, building on the original model of Peterson and Zimmerman?

Q2. Which characteristics can be added to the original model?

This leads to several conclusions. The first conclusion on *intra-organizational empowerment* is that the review confirms that opportunity role structure, group based belief system, empowering leadership and social support increase OE. Subgroup linkages play a key role. No developments have been found related to incentive management.

Second, several characteristics have been further conceptualized by describing indicators that increase OE (Forenza, 2014). This is relevant because these processes are an important foundation for inter- and extra-organizational empowerment (Griffith *et al.*, 2008, 2010). Third, team empowerment and SOC have been added to the model since several studies revealed that these processes contribute to OE. Fourth, we found that organizational learning increases the viability of an organization. No new results have been found for the outcomes underpopulated settings, collaboration of co-empowered subgroups, resolved ideological conflict and resource identification.

On the level of *inter-organizational empowerment* knowledge and insights have also increased, but less than on the intra-organizational level. First, the review shows that participation in alliance building is heavily influenced by the intra-organizational processes of the lead organization and that an alliance must contain several organizations with separate sets of empowered processes. Second, no new insights have been found on the process accessing the network of other organizations. Third, the review confirms that recourse procurement leads to increased financial support and technical assistance. Fourth,

no studies have revealed findings on collaboration nor tested the relationship between the various characteristics of inter-organizational empowerment. No new processes or outcomes could be added.

Concluding the findings about *extra-organizational empowerment*, the review revealed no new findings on the original processes. We did add organizational learning as a new process because it influences the way organizations react to environmental changes. On the level of the outcomes we found that alliance building contributes to influencing public policy.

Overall, research has mainly focused on the intra-organizational component, less on the inter- and extra-organizational components. Most studies have a quantitative design and aimed at developing the OE model; only five have tested the model's characteristics. Further, most research on the outcomes focused on influencing public policy. Presenting the included articles in chronical order revealed that publications on OE have increased since 2013. Finally, the main conclusion is that empowerment on the intra- and inter-organizational level functions as a foundation for the extra-organizational level.

Practical implications suggest that managers in human service organizations play an important role in implementing the processes of the OE model to effectively achieve organizational goals. For instance, by investing in subgroup linkages, having a supportive attitude and creating opportunities for members' professional development in different roles. Organizations should invest in building alliances to exert influence on public policy and gain several other advantages. Professionals have a key role in this by building bridges and having outgroup contacts. Further, findings are also relevant for educators and researchers in the field of human service organizations; educators can apply the knowledge in their program and researchers gain insights for the further development, conceptualization and validation of OE.

Discussion

Fourteen years after the OE model was presented, evidence has generally increased at the processes of intra-organizational empowerment. Further research is needed on all components, but specifically on the intra-organizational outcomes, inter- and extra-organizational components. This calls into the question what causes this gap in the literature. One explanation might be that the complexity of these components makes them complicated to study. Another reason could be that the research simply focused too much on the first component, which has created a blind spot for the other two components.

In addition, the type of research that has been performed is mostly based on a quantitative design. This might be a bias because qualitative research is needed to understand how professionals gain empowerment and how the organization influences this process (Christens and Lin, 2014). Further, it seems that the components of OE are rather artificial, which raises the question of how OE deals with the fluidity and dynamics of an organization.

Also, more research is needed on testing the relationship between the processes and outcomes of each component, but also across components. For instance, one result in this review suggests that viability and alliance building are connected. This leads us to wonder whether there are more "crossover" connections in the model. Another possible criticism is that there are many processes and outcomes. Ideally, a distinction should be made to prioritize the most important ones. Further, this review led to additions of the OE model. These should be further studied from the perspective of how they influence and are related to each other. For instance, it is not clear how SOC is related to OE because authors argue differently about it.

During the review, we found that participation is implicitly present in the framework of OE. Only one study (Powell and Peterson, 2014) focused on how participation is linked with the processes in the model. Future research should explicate how the processes influence

participation. This is needed because participation is a fundamental element of empowerment. A framework developed by Depauw and Driessens (2016) provides a basis to further include and study participation within the OE model.

Further, the current OE model depicts the way an organization influences public policy and practice through extra-organizational empowerment; it does not include the way organizations react to the demands of institutions and how organizations are able to create new institutions which are in the best interest of the organization. Based on this observation it appears that the OE model is missing a connection with organizational theories. This is also argued by Franscescato and Aber (2015); they state that organizational theory should be used to build OE. In addition, Evans (2005), Griffith *et al.* (2007) found that organizations are influenced by external forces and argue that there is a need of organizational studies and approaches to achieve social change.

An organizational theory that provides the opportunity to connect organizational theories to OE is the institutional theory which offers a framework to analyses how organizations and professionals react to and can influence their institutional environment (Scott, 2008). It contains three dimensions:

(1) the regulatory dimension which refers to rules that maintain in institutions to regulate behavior (e.g. organizational structures, procedures and guidelines);

(2) the normative dimension which refers to the applicable values and standards that an organization should take into account to obtain legitimacy; and

(3) the cognitive dimension which refers to the shared conceptions that arise when there is interaction between different actors (Scott, 2008).

An example of a study in which the institutional theory provided a framework to study how organizations may influence the institutional environment is the study of Mattingly and Westover (2015). They examined how borrowed legitimacy in a coalition can contribute to the legitimacy of the reference organization.

Another missing perspective is that of the profession. In the OE model, the professional is embedded in the organization. It is important to consider that professionals' behavior is also influenced by their profession. A framework for studying this is professional governance: it provides a view of how a profession influences the behavior and actions of related professionals. In addition, it might also contribute to the empowerment of the professional because it provides tools to further develop professionalism (Abbot, 1988).

We end this article by discussing some limitations. The study specifically reviews the OE model in Google Scholar and Web of Science. Searching other databases on OE as a broad concept might have provided additional insights. Another limitation is that some of the included studies have a fragile basis with a small sample of respondents. Further, the included articles were written by authors from various countries, each of which has its own context. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted carefully.

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