

# Dysfunctional Outsider Executives' Rule and the *Terra Incognita* of Concealed Managerial Ignorance

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## Abstract

**Concealed managerial ignorance (CMI) is a dark secret that protects managerial authority, a terra incognita that evades customary research methods. A longitudinal semi-native ethnography of automatic processing plants and their parent inter-kibbutz cooperatives by a management-educated ex-manager untangled the dysfunctional rule of outsider executives who concealed their ignorance by detachment from knowledgeable employees or/and by seductive-coercive control. Both practices retained ignorance by vicious distrust cycles of secrecy, mistakes, and failures, but total failures blocked vulnerably involved mid-level managers whose vulnerable involvement created high-trust local cultures through virtuous trust and learning cycles. Successes empowered them, so that ignorant superiors, who felt threatened, suppressed them, and they left. New outsider replacements were recruited, opted for CMI, failed, and replaced by new knowledgeable outsiders who succeeded, were empowered, and suppressed, and so on; this seesawed prolonged rule by dysfunctional ignorant executives. CMI by outsiders was found to be widespread, supporting the critique of distant leadership and the premise of managerial knowledge portability. The findings point to the potential of ethnographing executives missed by anthropologists and the need for studies of distrustful practices, while in practice offering new yardsticks for assessing candidates for executive jobs.**

## Keywords

**Concealed Managerial Ignorance, Insider/Outsider Executives, Managers' Expertises, Involved/Detached Managers, Low/High-Trust Cultures**

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## 1. Introduction

With the “practice turn” in the social sciences (Schatzki et al., 2001), organization studies rediscovered the

concept of practice (Rennstam & Ashcraft, 2014). A major advantage of the “practice lens” is its critical power (Gherardi, 2009), but organizational ethnography has not used this “lens” to analyze managerial knowledge and ignorance as it failed to study executives (Welker et al., 2011: p. S5). Executive positions confer power and intangible capitals (e.g., Bourdieu 1977) by which ignorance can be concealed, as well as authority, which invites concealment: Blau’s (1955) senior officers defended their professional authority by consulting only juniors, to conceal ignorance from fellow seniors and superiors. Dalton’s (1959) managers gained promotion through patrons’ auspices and cliques’ support rather than by proved competence, while artificial elevations of credentials legitimized promotion (ibid: p. 149). The job-specific knowledge bases of US managers were found to be sub-standard (Gannon, 1983); some 50% were incompetent (Baldoni, 2008; Curphy et al., 2008), and many were too insecure to admit ignorance to enable them to learn (Kanter, 1977; May, 1998). In the US, where the majority of organizational knowledge and learning studies has been conducted (Easterby-Smith & Lyles, 2003: p. 640), ineffective managers who were surely more ignorant than effective ones, preempt the latter in the promotion race (Luthans, 1988). Knowledgeable, effective managers were very rare among the some 80,000 studied by Gallup (Buckingham & Coffman, 1999). Much the same was found elsewhere (Armstrong, 1987; Mehri, 2005; Roux-Dufort, 2009; Shapira, 1987; Webb & Cleary, 1994). Boddy (2010) found that 16% - 28% of Australian managers were psychopaths who advanced without proving competence. Diefenbach (2013) states that “overtly positive and undifferentiated, unrealistically flattering and naive pictures of leaders” (p. 150) prevail in organization studies, while Dick (2008) states that those who “hold positions of power...would claim that they do so because they possess appropriate credentials—relevant competencies, qualifications, experiences, and so forth. However, much of this symbolic capital is open to contest as to its reality and worth” (p. 340).

Kruger and Dunning (1999) and their followers found that the ignorant rarely knows the extent of her/his ignorance, while according to Harvey et al. (2001) “...specifying ignorance is possible only in those organizational contexts in which dialogue and inquiry into unknowns is an established cultural norm” (p. 451). Ignorant managers have an obvious reason for avoiding it, defending authority, and have the powers to conceal ignorance as a dark secret, i.e., its very existence is kept secret (Goffman, 1959), veiled by conspiracies of silence (Hase et al., 2006). Secrecy enhances the advancement of ingratiating ignorant loyalists (Hirschman, 1970) through psychopathic/narcissistic or Machiavellian bluffing, scapegoating, and other abuses and subterfuges (Boddy, 2010; Dalton, 1959; Jackall, 1988; Jay, 1969; Kets De Vries, 1993; Lewis, 2011; Shapira, 1987, 1995b; Stein, 2001; Stern & Westphal, 2010).

For example, an “incompetent and spineless subordinate” was promoted to manage an R&D department in Toyota by a predecessor who did not “want to give up power [but] wanted to have his puppet in place so he [could] keep pulling the strings” from another department (Mehri, 2005: p. 199). Ethnographer engineer Mehri and his colleagues “were all shocked” by this promotion, which promised continuation of the practice of managers who usurped successful employee ideas and claimed them for themselves (Mehri, 2005: pp. 142, 198). Both this practice and the nomination of incompetent ignorant managers are integral to the context of managers’ competition for power and promotion, which encourages the use of the above-cited low-moral means that cause conflict and distrust, preventing managers from tapping into workers’ knowledge (Burawoy, 1979; Gittell, 2000; Roy, 1952). According to Orr (2006) “Managers...listen to those above them in the hierarchy and speak to those below; ...this Babel is hierarchically arranged, with considerable differences in power; and comprehensibility, or at least attention, ...based on this distribution” (p. 1818).

Managerial power can achieve much knowledge, but it cannot ensure having the interactional expertise required for intelligent communication with employees (Collins & Evans, 2007), since such expertise requires knowing the languages of their practices (Collins, 2011); yet power may inhibit the openness (Collinson, 2005; Mehri, 2005) required to teach them. Managers may ignore employees’ problem-solving know-how and *phronesis* (Greek for practical wisdom), because efforts to learn expose their own ignorance (Grove, 1996: p. 144). By ignoring technicians’ learning and problem-solving in communities of practitioners, Xerox higher-ups concealed their ignorance of technicians’ knowledge, which would have been exposed if they had engaged technicians’ critique of the design and building defects of machines, critique with the potential to overcome machinery defects (Orr, 1996: pp. 24-28, 81-87, 92). Presuming that Xerox executives were educated and intelligent, did they know what they were missing, or did their ignorance prevent awareness thereof (Kruger & Dunning, 1999)? If they knew but nevertheless avoided technicians, was it a practice whose logic was not that of logicians (Bourdieu, 1990: p. 86) presuming the ignorant would prefer learning but that of defenders of power, authority, status, and privileges (Blau, 1955; Kets De Vries, 1993)?

Lacking answers to these questions, Orr (2006) recommended “ethnography of managers ...to understand their perspectives, including why they view the technicians’ knowledge as they do” (p. 1818). Spender (2008) suggested “...returning to a time when theorizing was grounded in what we now choose to ignore, namely managers’ experiences and practices...” (p. 159) rather than the disregard of organizational ethnography by behaviorists and sociologists (Bate, 1997). Ethnographies of experiences and practices are essential for “[a] practice epistemology [that] focuses squarely on the use of knowledge...as it is adapted to the needs of any given situation” (Jarzabkowski et al., 2010: p. 1195). One situation of [ab] use of knowledge is managers defending authority by ignorance concealment (e.g., Blau, 1955); untangling it requires one to live amongst managers, “learning their language, tendencies, and dispositions and participating in their practices and rituals” (Rasche & Chia, 2009: p. 713). The author did this by a unique longitudinal semi-native anthropology which untangled the problematic *terra incognita* of concealed managerial ignorance (CMI).

CMI is dealt with in four sections:

- 1) Comprehending CMI,
- 2) The missing of CMI and its ethnographic exposure,
- 3) Findings on detached/coercively involved ignorant managers and on their opposites,
- 4) Conclusions, discussion, and suggestions.

## 2. Comprehending CMI

“In the field of management learning there is increasing recognition of the importance of ignorance,” yet “there is, as yet, no systematic consideration of organizational ignorance” contends Roberts (2013: p. 215). Managerial ignorance is even less studied topic: A Google search yielded only two old titles that included “managerial ignorance” (Gannon, 1983; Von der Embse, 1983), and only one academic title with “managerial incompetence,” which ignored ignorance (Griffin & Wiggins, 1992). Accordingly, Hambrick (2007) explained executives’ failures by “fatigue, boredom, jealousy, cognitive biases, social preening and selfishness” (p. 341), but not by ignorance. This, disregard of ignorance seemingly signals the power of managers to portray themselves as knowledgeable (Dick, 2008), and to prevent employees refuting them (Bennis, 2010: p. 4). Recent business scandals as well as Vilette and Vuillermot (2009) disproved myths concerning businessmen’s success through ingenuity. Wise and ingenious managerial decision-making requires knowing which employee contributions are relevant and reliable, and whose specialized knowledge, information, experience, and intuition should be considered (Galbraith, 1971; Klein, 1998; Klein, 2004). A manager needs comprehensive company and industry knowledge (Grove, 1996; Kotter, 1982) and pertinent expertises to engage fruitfully experts and experts’ managers (Collins, 2011; Collins & Evans, 2007; Gobillot, 2007; Meyer, 2010). S/he can engender ascending trust spiral (Fox, 1974) and willingness to share all their specialized knowledge through vulnerable exposure of her/his own ignorance by asking questions and discussing analyses and solutions (Zand, 1972). Only then can s/he clearly discern knowledgeable skilled employees from fools, impostors, boot-lickers, and other unskilled, and genuine from spurious premises of decisions (Kets De Vries, 1993; Flyvbjerg, 2001: pp. 10-19; Poulin et al., 2007: p. 320; Simon, 1957: p. 227).

Unfortunately, the above is not enough to become truly knowledgeable, since one must acquire “*phronesis* [which] requires *experience*” (Flyvbjerg, 2006: p. 362; original emphasis). Although prior experience may hinder learning, it is, for the most part, invaluable (Klein, 1998; Klein, 2004), because only experience can teach the tacit parts of know-how and *phronesis*. Contrary to some authors, even experts can rarely teach others these tacit parts as they are acquired by engaging problems and indwelling in specific problem-solving situations, in which participants create local know-how and problem-solving competence (D’Eredita & Barreto, 2006; Fine, 2012; Magala, 1997; Spender, 2008; Wilson, 2002). According to Tsoukas (2005), as one learns how to use a hammer so does one learn to use “intangible constructions such as... linguistic or cultural knowledge. To use a tool properly, we need to assimilate it and dwell in it” (149). An executive becomes truly knowledgeable only by assimilation and indwelling in employees’ problem-solving and decision-making, because learning is “an ongoing social accomplishment, constituted and reconstituted as [one] engaged in the world of practice” (Orlikowski, 2002: p. 249; also: Rennstam & Ashcraft, 2014; Shapira, 2013).

## Insider/Outsider Successors, Newcomers’ Involvement Dilemma, and CMI

Many ethnographers of industrial work, from Collins et al. (1946) and Roy (1952) to Orr (1996) and Mehri

(2005), found that managers were mostly ignorant of employees' work-acquired know-how and *phronesis*, shared with peers in trustful practitioner communities from which managers were excluded. Promotion aggravates ignorance: A newly promoted manager takes charge of new less familiar units/functions with whose employees s/he has little or no trust relations, and suffers large knowledge gaps concerning their expertises; this is most pronounced if one is an outsider who experienced other technologies, expertises, practices, and more (Bower, 2007; Kotter, 1982; Perrow, 1970). Such one may learn the processes by which products or services are produced, but not know how these processes function (Brown & Duguid, 2001). Rarely, s/he knows the *phronesis* and know-how by which her/his new subordinates solve problems, as these tools are acquired by indwelling in specific problems. Even an insider CEO may have to admit his ignorance of a major domain, inviting employees to teach him (Grove, 1996: pp. 144-145).

Very often there is no substitute for local knowledge unknown to outsiders (Fine, 2012); it is essential even for the manager of a scientific laboratory (Rouse, 1987: Ch. 4) or a university leader: Change efforts by a new president, a talented outsider academician, were fruitless, until he established and worked with an "executive constellation" of knowledgeable locals (Bennis, 1991: pp. 17-19). Outsider executives are common: 58% of US executives were outsiders (Campbell et al., 1995), as were 33% CEOs of the 500 S&P firms (Bower, 2007). Importing firms rarely considered the relevance of importees' specialization (Khurana, 2002), although Kotter (1982) found that the best executives had specialized for many years in specific industries and firms.

The prevalence of outsiders may explain why CMI remains *terra incognita*: research that ignored it legitimized the offices of ignorant CEOs whose donations financed academy. Outsiders were also legitimized by numerous succession studies, which for half a century failed to conclude whether insiders or outsiders were preferable (Karaevli, 2007; Shen & Cannella, 2002), but other research found superiority of insiders (Bower, 2007; Collins, 2001; Heskett, 2011; Khurana, 2002; Santora, 2004; Shapira, 1987, 2008). Bower (2007) explained this superiority by inside knowledge that outsiders lacked, but he found large variability among outsiders; some succeeded (e.g., Guest, 1962) while other failed (e.g., Gouldner, 1954, 1955). The prime difference was trust levels: Guest's outsider trusted locals, engaged their problem-solving, vulnerably exposed ignorance, learned, and together they solved problems and succeeded (e.g., Raelin, 2013; Washburn, 2011; Zand, 1972), while Gouldner's outsider failed as he did not trust deputies, replaced them with outsiders ignorant of local problems whose seductive-coercive rule concealed ignorance, causing descending trust spirals (Fox, 1974) and conflicts that prevented learning and problem-solving.

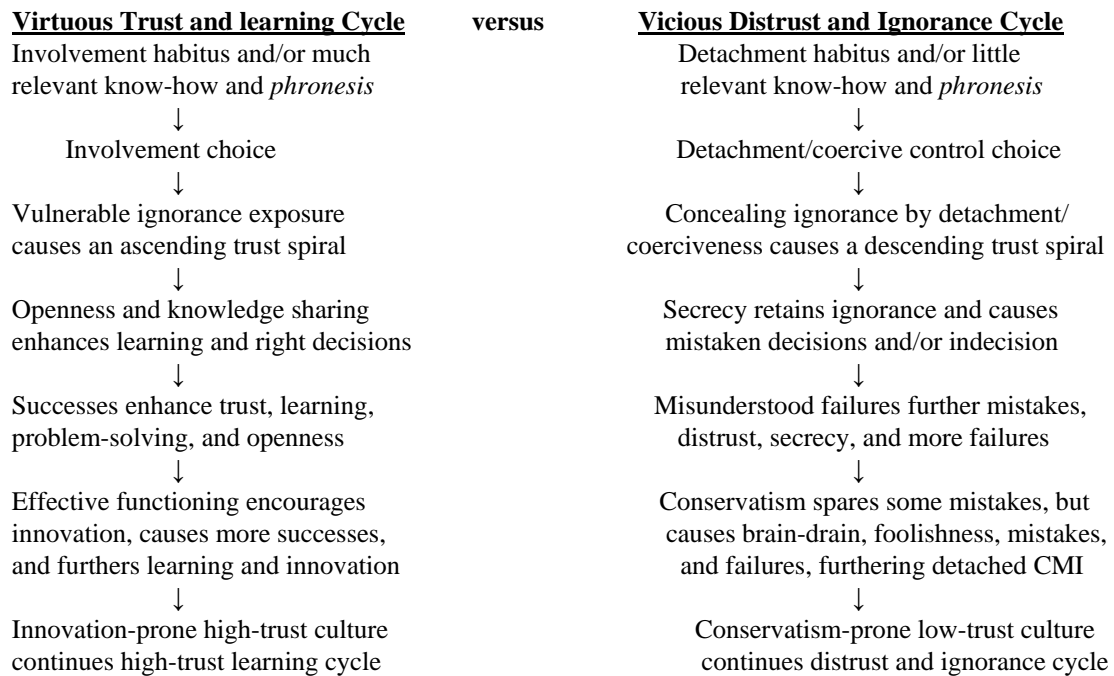
Only a trusted manager can expose ignorance without employees exploiting his vulnerability against him (Mayer et al., 1995) and only if trusted employees will help him learn and solve problems (Deutsch, 1962; Lee et al., 2010; Zand, 1972). An outsider tends to distrust unknown locals (Chua et al., 2012; Kipnis, 1976) much as they distrust him, knowing little of his past and nothing about his future actions. He faces a tough involvement dilemma (Shapira, 1995b): He may learn by vulnerable involvement that exposes ignorance and gains some trust; but gaining full trust, crucial for learning and intelligent leadership (Bennis, 2010; Fairholm 1994; Heifetz, 1995; O'Toole, 1999), requires proven capability (Pirson & Malhotra, 2011) with high-moral trusting practices (Geneen, 1984: Ch. 4; Hosmer, 1995; Six & Sorge, 2008), and success that promises more success (Poppo et al., 2008; Shapira, 1987). These factors explained the 30-year success of CEO Ken Iverson and CFO Sam Siegel at the Nucor Corporation (O'Toole, 1999: p. 173; Poulin & Siegel, 2005) and the successes of Brazilian Semco (Semler, 1993) and Israeli kibbutzim (pl. of kibbutz; Shapira, 2001, 2008).

However, an outsider manager's choice of vulnerable involvement cannot ensure success, because it takes time to learn languages of practices, to gain interactional expertise, to learn local know-how, to prove competence, and to ascend mutual trust spiral with locals (Fox, 1974), while s/he faces problems that require immediate action. S/he seeks early wins to build credibility (Watkins, 2003), but unknowns cause mistakes, conflicts, and distrust. However, one has to choose either involved learning or CMI upon taking office, knowing more about risks of failure than about probable heuristic gains of locals' trust (McEvily, 2011). These hurdles make the involved learning/CMI dilemma much tougher for outsiders than insiders (Shapira, 1995b). In expectancy theory terms (Vroom, 1964), the valence of vulnerable involvement is much weaker for outsiders, who suffer larger knowledge gaps (Bower, 2007), than for knowledgeable insiders, and the more ignorant an outsider is, the more motivated he is to opt for CMI.

An outsider with little pertinent experience and meager relevant and referred expertise, i.e. expertise in different domains that helps learning and problem-solving (Collins & Sanders, 2007) may see little prospect of building authority by involved learning that may enable successes (Watkins, 2003) and opt for detachment that

conceals ignorance, or for seductive-coercive involvement that also conceals it (Gittell, 2000). Studies of detached leadership have not explored whether it concealed ignorance (e.g., Antonakis & Atwater, 2002; Cole et al., 2009; Collinson, 2005), although detachment limits vulnerability, which degrades trust and social capital (Carroll & Simpson, 2012; Mayer et al., 1995; Zand, 1972), interfering with collaborative engaging problems, knowledge-sharing, learning, and problem-solving (Haslam et al., 2011; Gobillot, 2007; Meyer, 2010; Raelin, 2013; Shapira, 2013). Ignorance concealment which often has commenced as a benign reaction to being an unacquainted outsider (Chua et al., 2012; Kipnis, 1976) tends to transform into a pattern and personal strategy (Mintzberg, 1987) of detachment or/and seductive-coercive control CMI.

The vulnerable involvement versus detachment/seductive-coercive involvement choice results in either a virtuous trust and learning cycle or vicious distrust and ignorance cycle, engendering either an innovation-prone high-trust culture, termed “organic” by Burns and Stalker (1961; also: Shapira, 2008; Dore, 1973; Kets De Vries, 2001: Ch. 6; Ouchi, 1981; Semler, 1993), or a conservatism-prone bureaucracy (e.g., Crozier 1964), summarized thus:



### 3. The Missing of CMI and Its Ethnographic Exposure

#### 3.1. The Many Reasons CMI Remained a *Terra Incognita*

The concealment/camouflaging of ignorance by many US outsider executives seems to have negatively affected organizational knowledge studies, the majority of which, as mentioned, have been performed in the US; effective, knowledgeable managers have been rare there as they often failed in the promotion race. A major reason for failure seems to have been other managers’ low-moral politics, Machiavellian cheating, psychopathic ingratiation, and other abuses (Boddy, 2010; Jackall, 1988; Jay, 1969; Stein, 2001). States Lewis (2011) “Everywhere you turn, you see Americans sacrifice their long term interests for a short term reward” (205). Only 12% of US managers felt their workplace encouraged honesty (Maccoby, 1976: p. 176); for 18 years, an American CEO actively sought honesty and sincerity among executives with only partial success (Geneen, 1984: pp. 86-104). Most other studies were conducted in the UK, which was quite similar (Armstrong, 1987; Collinson, 2005; Dore, 1973; Parker, 2000; Webb & Cleary, 1994).

Managerial ignorance is also largely hidden because functionalist research has ignored the impact of power and conflicts of interest on organizational knowledge-sharing (Contu & Willmott, 2003). In two large collections on these subjects (Dierks et al., 2001; Easterby-Smith & Lyles, 2003), only some 15% - 20% of articles depart from this generalization. Though trust is decisive in knowledge-sharing, organizational knowledge studies (e.g., Ackerman et al., 2003; Argot, 1999) have rarely alluded to distrust, because of hierarchical conflicts barring such

sharing (Fox, 1974). Such is also the case with leadership studies (Collinson, 2005: p. 241) and many trust studies (e.g., Kramer & Tyler, 1996; Kramer & Cook, 2004; Noteboom, 2002).

CMI was also missed for another reason: An employee who distrusts managers conceals some know-how to maintain managers' dependency on his unique capabilities, and to prevent dismissal (Roy, 1952), hence they are ignorant of this know-how (Collinson, 2005). Worse still, one employee's secrecy encourages that of others, and in a milieu of secrecy and distrust, even an anthropologist may need some years to become privy to secrets (Turnbull, 1972: pp. 272-279). Secrecy was common where most research was performed, in the US and the UK (Dalton, 1959; Dore, 1973; Stein, 2001; Webb & Cleary, 1994), aggravating outsiders' hardships with overcoming knowledge gaps. These gaps and prospects of hardships and plausible learning failures encouraged CMI to defend jobs, prestige, power, and privileges, while managers concealed ignorance also from themselves, to defend their self-worth and job legitimacy, and to avoid cognitive dissonance (Hase et al., 2006; May, 1998).

### 3.2. Anthropology's Achilles Heel Concerning CMI

Penetrating CMI demands a different research approach than is usually taken in management studies, to overcome the obstacle of managers using their powers to conceal ignorance. Ethnographer Edgerton (1967) exposed detachment as an ignorance concealment strategy by studying mentally retarded youth, finding that when outside their shelter, they defended their image of competence by avoiding others who might have exposed their incompetence. This and the above-cited ethnographies indicate the potential of ethnography to penetrate CMI, but the common industrial field-work as an operator, technician, or even engineer conveys little about executives' problems, deliberations, and whether they are willing to expose their ignorance to learn, and if and how they cope with tasks. For example, Mehri (2005), as an engineer at Toyota's R&D department, knew that its new manager was "incompetent and spineless" and that the previous manager put "his puppet in [his] place" (199). However, he knew nothing about higher-ups' involvement in the fiasco, and if and how their action/inaction and policies were related to it. Dalton's (1959) informants also described such promotions, but neither Mehri nor Dalton did what the sages of old advised: "Do not judge others until you have stood in their place." Barnard's (1938) critique echoed this dictum: "...social scientists...just reached the edge of organization as I experienced it, and retreated. Rarely did they seem...to sense the processes of coordination and decision that underlie a large part, at least, of the phenomenon they described" (viii).

Anthropologists faced a built-in barrier: Participant observations in the lower echelons did not enable "to sense the processes of coordination and decision" as executives experienced them. Moreover, anthropologists remained for too short periods to untangle and explain CMI. Worse still, managers would rather retain "the cloak of competence" (Edgerton, 1967) with temporary employees, which anthropologists were (Yanow, 2004b), defending authority by concealing ignorance, mistakes, and failures. Moreover, anthropologists needed managerial education (Yanow, 2004b) and experience to acquire managerial interactional expertise; they then had to be insider-outsiders involved in executive deliberations (Gioia et al., 2010). As CMI is impacted by managers' roles, statuses, powers, relationships, habituses (Bourdieu, 1990), and career prospects, the ethnographer must learn all these by gaining informants' full trust, openness, and genuine rapport. Only engineer Mehri (2005), a three year engineer ethnographer, penetrated CMI, but only concerning his direct superiors, neither their superior mid-level managers, nor executives. Nor did ethnographies by consultants untangle CMI (e.g., Gobillot, 2007; Kanter, 1977; Meyer, 2010).

### 3.3. Longitudinal Insider-Outsider Semi-Native Anthropology Exposed CMI

Thirty five years ago, after 15 years in managerial jobs at my kibbutz's automatic processing plant, and with both anthropological and managerial education (e.g., Yanow, 2004a), I commenced phronetic studies (Flyvbjerg, 2001: Ch. 10) by ethnographies of 20 local kibbutz plants, using shop-floor observations and open interviews with 33 managers, 45 engineers, and 86 foremen, technicians, and workers (Shapira, 1979, 1980). Subsequently, I studied the industrial-commercial cooperative Merkaz Regional Enterprises (a pseudonym, as are all names hereafter) owned by 40 kibbutzim, which handled their agricultural input and output in six plants (Niv & Bar-On, 1992; e.g. Stryjan, 1989; Vargas-Cetina, 2011). I focused on the automatic, high-capacity cotton gin plant, as many of its problems resembled those of my kibbutz's automatic plant, so that experience informed my study. Another favourable factor was the semi-native nature of my anthropology as an insider-outsider: I was a kibbutz member, like the managers who came from the kibbutzim. Hence, I knew some of them personally and approached

them as a peer. The cooperative employed some 200 kibbutz member administrators called *pe'ilim* (activists; singular: *pa'il*) and some 650 hired employees, with some US\$350 million in annual sales (Shapira, 1987). Kibbutzim received uniform salaries for *pe'ilim*'s work, and their formal terms were five years, in accord with the supposedly egalitarian *rotatzia* (rotation) norm, but contrary to egalitarianism, they enjoyed differential perks according to rank and power, and powerful *pe'ilim* kept jobs much longer, becoming oligarchic rulers like life-long kibbutz movement leaders (Beilin, 1984; Shapira, 1995a, 2005, 2008).

At first I openly interviewed the CEO and 23 executives while touring the plants, which had prospered, recently expanded and exhibited technological virtuosity (e.g., Galbraith, 1971) and lavished amenities for *pe'ilim* staff. Often interviews became a long (up to hour and a half) manager-to-manager discussion of the pros and cons of solutions to common problems (recorded in writing). I freely read minutes of management sessions, reviewed working papers and publications and observed meeting places such as dining halls, holding informal talks with other *pe'ilim*. I found little interest among most executives in advancing plant effectiveness and efficiency, contrary to their assertions and contrary to 33 local kibbutz plant managers studied earlier who sought efficiency, effectiveness, and innovation in order to succeed in competitive markets. Merkaz plants marketed their produce through national marketers and their suppliers were mostly owner-kibbutzim obliged to use their services. All ten Israeli cotton gin plants belonged to such cooperatives, and kibbutzim paid using a "cost plus" system. Such systems are known to suffer from inefficiency; hence, I suspected these in the gin plant.

First I openly interviewed 96 present and past *pe'ilim* from the gin plant's nineteen-year history (interviews normally lasted one hour and were recorded by taking notes), and found brain-drain due to negative selection by conservative managers pruning talented critical thinkers and innovators, while mediocre self-servers loyalists stayed on (e.g., Dalton, 1959; Hirschman, 1970). I also found that executives primarily sought growth and technological virtuosity (Galbraith, 1971), further indicating power, prestige, privileges, and tenure-seeking, rather than how to best serve the owner-kibbutzim (Shapira, 1987, 2008).

Interviews and intermittent observations over four years raised the suspicion that managers were ignorant of plants' main problems, which were technical, operational, and skilled manpower, as other organizations took charge of other business problems. Hence, I held mini-seminars of these problems with nationally renowned ginning experts. I learned gin plant technology and acquired considerable "know-that" before learning its "know-how" (Brown & Duguid, 2001) by participant observation as registrar. After participant observation, I was so knowledgeable that technicians and foremen asked me why I would not become the plant manager instead of their ignorant boss (see below).

Participant observation was very intensive: three and half months of high season round-the-clock, seven-day-a-week shift work, with 500 - 700 tons of raw cotton processed daily. I worked a shift and often visited the other two to observe major events. My job enabled me to write from time to time and further details were added after each shift, resulting in a thousand-page observation journal. My much referred expertise (Collins & Sanders, 2007) from my earlier experience and research enhanced understanding and belief in my interpretations of behaviours (e.g., Geertz, 1973), but to ensure these after the season ended, I conducted 72 open home interviews with plant staff and cotton growers familiar with the plant. Then I toured four other gin plants, observed their premises and similarly interviewed 63 present and past managers and staff members.

Following Barnard (1938: p. viii), I learned plant coordination and decision-making without participation in managers' sessions, by interviewing all managers, in addition to years of close ties with some of them and other informants, reading session minutes and making frequent visits. I learned their prior careers, habituses, and the positions they took in major conflicts that exposed their aims, hopes, and expectations. I observed their involvement in or detachment from major problem-solving efforts, either exposing ignorance or concealing it, and how concealment defended the image of competence that legitimized jobs and careers, despite neglect, mistakes, and failures. However, it took me years after publishing early research (Shapira, 1987, 1995a, 1995b) to realize that managerial ignorance was a personal strategy; hence, the CMI concept did not yet appear in these publications.

## 4. Findings on Detached/Coercively Involved Ignorant Managers and on Their Opposites

### 4.1. Outsider Managers' Detachment/Coercive Control Concealed Ignorance

*A mute fool is reputed to be wise* (Jewish saying).

Detachment from expert deliberations which permitted muteness was the ploy and pattern that became a personal CMI strategy (Mintzberg, 1987), similar to the strategy employed by Edgerton's (1967) retarded teenagers. All managers of the five cotton gin plants were *pe'ilim* "parachuted" into jobs, the Israeli term for outsider executives appointed with little relevant experience and knowledge, e.g., an ex-senior army commander "parachuted" to head a big firm or city. The five year ethnographing and 231 interviews in five plants revealed that eighteen "parachuted" gin plant managers either remained detached or were coercively-seductively involved, the other ploy permitting CMI; only three plant managers were vulnerably involved, like Guest's (1962) outsider and the mid-levelers depicted below, engendering virtuous trust and learning cycles, and his plant excelled nationally for a decade until his succession.

Detached CMI was chosen by two of the three managers during the focal plant's nineteen years of existence. Only one, Yuval, opted for coercive involvement, as he had referred expertise as an ex-manager of a kibbutz's cotton branch, which both his predecessor and his successor lacked. But ignorant of ginning and much younger than veteran expert locals, he lacked psychological safety (e.g., Edmondson, 1999) to risk ignorance exposure by the vulnerable involvement required to gain locals' trust (Mayer et al., 1995). Mostly distanced, he only intermittently, and autocratically, interfered, minimally listening to experts and decreeing amateurish decisions that caused failures, animosity, distrust, and secrecy, as did Gouldner's (1954) outsider. Similar to the latter, he nominated outsider loyal lieutenant *pe'ilim*, rather than promoting expert insiders, and roamed around the plant seeking information and culprits for failures, rather than trying to learn from them (Gittell, 2000). An example of his ignorance was the incident where he drove a forklift over a frail pit cup which broke, and he and the machine fell into the pit. He was replaced early, after four years, although the normative term was five, because in addition to failures he also had a love affair with his female secretary that became intolerable in the high season, when the two would frequently disappear for half a day, with no way of contacting him to decide concerning urgent problems.

Unfortunately, both Yuval's predecessor and successor were detached CMI "parachutists": The first, Moav (aged 61), came after decades of experience as a treasurer of a national co-op wholesaler. The third, Shavit (32), was an ex-kibbutz economic manager and ex-building branch manager, who had supervised contractors without himself managing workers. They had college business educations and knew accounting and finances very well, but next to nothing about plant's uncertainty zones (Crozier, 1964) of major problems, which were technical, operational, and skilled manpower shortages.

I did not observe the plant in Moav's era, as I commenced work during Yuval's last year, but dozens of interviews with former employees, supported by minutes of management sessions, testified to Moav's detachment and ignorance of plant's problems, aside from finances, as was the case with Shavit, whom I did observe. Moav survived a decade in office, twice the formal term, because he was a close friend of the Merkaz CEO and supporter on the cooperative Board of Directors, an asset which might have been lost by succession. Second, the plant functioned well, although it did not excel, during its first eight years, since Moav, experienced in management, let two vulnerably involved younger deputy *pe'ilim* lead the plant, creating an "us" feeling (Haslam et al., 2011) by virtuous trust and learning cycles, proving both competence and integrity to subordinates. The two came from kibbutzim to manage the plant's construction and then its operation, while they learned ginning by experiencing vulnerable involvement, which Moav skipped. One deputy portrayed the plant Board's decision-making, thus:

...they [representatives of owner kibbutzim] did not understand much about most subjects on the agenda, and Moav and a manager of another plant who represented the cooperative on the plant's Board were quite similar. The only two who really knew what was going on in the plant and coped with almost all major problems, thus also shaping most decisions, were myself and Moav's other deputy.

Management sessions followed a set paradigm, according to minutes: Moav rarely spoke, except when finances were discussed trying to spare expenses. However, he was lavish with his own amenities: One of the first air-conditioned offices in the industrial park, a nice small company car, and more. Shavit behaved similarly; both tried to minimize their dependency on experts through conservatism, were distrusted by most employees, and I witnessed how distrust kept detached Shavit ignorant: He rarely visited the shop-floor, and when visiting, rarely spoke to operators and technicians, and never discussed major technical and operational problems, which they infrequently raised, with them. He asked only trivial questions, listened almost only to *pe'ilim*, rarely commenting and never questioning their explanations. In his fourth year, he did not know certain ginning basics



learned by me in my first week of work, accepting ignorant technical manager Avi's false explanations for unsolved problems at face value. The worst was Avi's false assertion that his mistaken design of the contour of the 30 inch pipe connecting the new cotton cleaner to the previous machine only marginally impacted its recurring clogging. All experts asserted otherwise, and when we cleared the cleaner blockings, they showed me how the mistaken contour pushed most of the cotton intake to one side of the machine, instead of the even distribution required for smooth operation. Neither Avi nor Shavit climbed the tall hot machine (four meters, 75 degrees centigrade) to look inside and check experts' assertions. Only after six weeks, in which workers suffered the difficult evacuation of compressed hot cotton blockings every few hours, was the pipe contour changed, after outside experts joined locals; then blockings became less frequent, disproving Avi's assertion (blockings continued due other unsolved problems; see below).

Detached, Shavit gained shop floor information by ties with an ignorant hired foreman and shop steward who was an expert in Machiavellian politics, not at ginning; he was Shavit's "two way funnel" (Dalton, 1959: pp. 232-234); he kept industrial peace, got a good salary, and was given leeway in his work. Shavit also nurtured him because of loneliness; even most *pe'ilim* shunned him.

#### 4.2. Technical Manager Avi Concealed Ignorance by Detachment

Avi used quite similar detachment; in addition to the cleaner, he failed to cope with the new automatic sampler. Avi had chosen it after touring manufacturers in the US, following the success of samplers in other plants, which spared a worker, sampling each quarter ton cotton bale coming out of the automatic hydraulic press (1500 ton pressure) every 1.75 minutes, while the plant worked at full speed. The sampler had no mechanical problems, but was still occasionally blocked, because of mistakes. To cut a long story short, the repeated blockings were a major headache for bale registrars (myself included), foremen, and technicians, but after some failures in trying to solve the problem, Avi stopped, said he was too busy with other problems; but he was bluffing, as with the cleaner fiasco. His facade (Goffman, 1959) of being busy angered registrars who secretly helped machine blockings. Technicians eventually also avoided it and the machine remained blocked, although experts from another plant in which a sampler worked smoothly offered help. I begged Avi that he or, a technician travel to their plant 70 kilometres away, but to no avail. One day I travelled to the other plant, learned its solutions to the sampler problem, and submitted a detailed report to Avi and Shavit, who turned me away angrily, and ignored my report (e.g., Yanow, 2004a). My report had broken their facade of being responsible managers, causing an angry reaction (Goffman, 1959).

Much worse outcomes were caused by Avi's detachment from the new cleaner problems, as this was a major machine in the ginning process. Both the US manufacturer and Avi had made major mistakes (one was depicted above), so that the machine reduced the production rate by some 20%, and fibre quality was damaged when it was bypassed (some 60 hours throughout the season). Repairing the manufacturer's prime mistake required halting the process for 48 - 72 hours, while every hour's stoppage meant that growers had to store 25 tons of raw cotton in the fields. Repairing Avi's mistaken pipe contour required a ten hour stoppage, but Avi denied its significance and the ignorant Shavit believed him, prevented the repair for six costly weeks; even after Avi's assertion proved false, he did not admit his mistake. The manufacturer's mistake was repaired only after the season ended and losses amounted to some \$US 150,000 - 200,000, but despite this and other failures, Shavit and Avi kept their jobs for another year, and then proceeded to careers elsewhere (e.g., Luthans, 1988).

#### 4.3. Career-Failing Involved Effective Managers vs. Ineffective but Successful Careerists

A CMI executive can survive years in the job with involved committed knowledgeable mid-levelers. Such were Moav's two deputy *pe'ilim*. Being successful, they expected that one of them would succeed Moav, when his five-year term ended and he reached retirement age, but as explained, Moav remained. They left in the sixth and eighth years, respectively, and plant functioning deteriorated, as no expert insiders replaced them, but rather "parachuted" *pe'ilim* supposedly defenders of interests of kibbutzim. One new *pa'il* chose detached CMI while the other, Yuval, used autocratic intermittent involvement and caused failures. He nevertheless succeeded Moav after a year and half, since the new detached ignorant CEO did not know about his failures; plant dysfunction seemed an outcome of Moav's advanced age, 71, and his over-long tenure, while Yuval promised the CEO a loyalist on the cooperative Board, as he was a member of the same kibbutz.

Yuval and his deputy then made an awful mistake, replacing the veteran technical manager by a young *pa'il*,

Avi (30), a certified practical engineer, who after a year and half as deputy technical manager, had supposedly learned ginning. In fact, Avi adopted detached CMI, but his bosses missed this as they were ignorant of their own ignorance (Kruger & Dunning, 1999). Avi soon failed on the job and Yuval's deputy called his kibbutz garage manager, Thomas (35), also a certified practical engineer, to the rescue.

The deputy explained the decision to bring Thomas in to me, thus: "Avi is not the right stuff that we [Yuval and I] have sought; he is not that [a truly technical manager]. Thomas has learned the problems much quicker and although he has only been on the job for four months, he has proved to be the right stuff." Thomas however testified that only after two intensive years of learning did he become a real ginning expert who changed plant functioning, similar to Guest's (1962) and Washburn's (2011) cases. Thomas was confident in his ability to succeed, although he knew little about ginning, because he practiced mechanics since the age of fourteen, and hence did not fear ignorance exposure by involvement. Like Moav's two deputies, he was highly involved and proved his ability and commitment (Pirson & Malhotra, 2011), engendering a virtuous trust and learning cycle and a local high-trust culture (e.g., Geneen, 1984: Ch. 4; Guest, 1962: Ch. 4). His openness and genuine efforts to solve problems encouraged knowledge-sharing and experiential learning (Orlikowski, 2002), locals taught him ginners' language (Collins, 2011), and he became a trusted member of their practitioners' community and learned its secrets by proving integrity and competence, becoming a servant transformational leader (Barbuto, 1997; Burns, 1978; Greenleaf, 1977).

Before coming to the plant, Thomas had managed an agricultural machinery garage, while Avi had managed the locksmith's shop of another kibbutz, each with two-three assistants, versus the plant's one hundred employees in high season and 27 permanent staff. Thomas had managed the garage for a few years, while Avi had held successive managerial positions since the age of twenty. However, Thomas enjoyed referred expertise as a very experienced mechanic and manager of mechanics, while Avi's previous jobs, except the last, were social-political: youth organizing, heading kibbutz committees and then its secretariat. This career encouraged detachment: a detached politician may advance, as he avoids failures by letting others cope with hard problems, and then fail and lose prestige and power. Thomas's career encouraged the opposite habitus: In the garage, he gained prestige and power by leading a team of mechanics who dived into the bellies of troubled machines, finding defects and fixing them, while he acquired expertise, developed self-assurance, and built trustful ties for further problem-solving capability.

But contrasting career paths were only a partial explanation. Yuval and his deputy brought Avi to the plant to succeed the veteran hired technical manager, an aim they kept secret to prevent resistance (Hase et al., 2006), since the natural successor was an experienced talented hired certified practical engineer, who was unofficial deputy technical manager. All informants denied their alleged explanation for not promoting him. The real reason was his power: He was ten years older than the two bosses, a very proficient ginner and very popular among the hired staff, and hence was chosen shop steward. The young greenhorn bosses worried that he would be uncontrollable if promoted to technical manager, preferring a young, *pa'il* like themselves (e.g., Gouldner, 1954; Kanter, 1977: Ch. 6).

Avi faced a tough involvement dilemma: His mechanical expertise was only theoretical, he had no ties with trusted experts to teach him ginning, no sign of whether he could gain their trust and knowledge-sharing, or how to attain such. The heuristic nature of a trust decision without known probability of success (McEvily, 2011) enhanced his dilemma. Had he tried to learn by involvement, he would have exposed his ignorance and lost authority (Blau, 1955), which might have been regained had he learned and succeeded, but this was unlikely without pertinent expertise, and no prospects of help. Initially, he was detached while figuring out whether to accept the job, and then continued thus to conceal his ignorance. The veteran technical manager suspected that he would succeed him and taught him minimally, as did his deputy, who rightly saw himself as the heir-apparent. This secrecy enhanced Avi's doubts about his learning prospects, keeping him detached and ignorant (Shapira, 1995b: pp. 90-91). Avi's detachment choice, his bosses' selecting him, and Thomas's vulnerable involvement all accorded with Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory, comported with each one interests.

Yuval and his deputy missed their own incompetence in judging Avi's ignorance; thus, Avi replaced the veteran technical manager and failed miserably, much as he did five years later in my presence. However, when Thomas came to the rescue, Avi was not fired: Thomas was formally installed as a second technical manager, on grounds of anticipated plant expansion for the booming cotton industry; in reality, Avi became an administrative aide to Thomas. He retained management membership and symbols such as a company car, as he served the power of his young bosses. His dependency on them assured his loyalty and helped tame Thomas's rising success-

based power (Klein, 1998).

Thomas successes were outcomes of a virtuous trust and learning cycle, creating an innovation-prone high-trust local culture, helped by three other involved *pe'ilim* (Shapira, 2013). A clear sign that he had become a prime Israeli ginning expert after five years on the job was his invitation by the world's largest ginning equipment manufacturer to join its R&D centre after inventing an automatic cotton feeder that was much cheaper and better suited to local equipment than the imported ones of world class manufacturers. Its cost was some \$US 80,000, while an imported feeder cost was some \$US 250,000. It was built and succeeded after a three-year struggle with Shavit's red tape that pushed Thomas out.

Thomas's success further explains Avi's failure: Thomas's coping with troubled machines continued for twenty years, while handsome, talkative, and intelligent Avi advanced a nice managerial career with minimal coping with difficult problems, by evading them or camouflaging solutions, as did many kibbutz managers (Shapira, 2001, 2008). He knew this could not work with machines, but he stuck to his successful career track. This was reflected in appearances: Avi's working clothes were clean, while Thomas's were dirty from personally coping with troubled machines whenever technicians failed. Avi remained a "half-baked manager" (Dore, 1973: p. 54), never becoming a genuine one; just as no one can learn to swim without entering the water, detached Avi did not "swim" in his job, never really dwelt in it.

#### 4.4. Ignorant Executives' Costly Mistake: Trusting Their Kind

One of executives' costliest ignorance-related mistakes is "parachuting" managers who lack, both pertinent and referred expertises (Collins & Sanders, 2007). Ignorant Yuval and his deputy missed Avi's year and a half of detached CMI as a deputy technical manager and promoted him; ignorant Shavit repeated this mistake five years later after Thomas had left. Formally, at that time, Avi was an experienced technical manager; he was fluent in ginning jargon, so Shavit trusted him in the job, but Avi repeatedly failed throughout the three and a half month season, which I witness, but was not fired: Shavit and his deputy Danton tried to convince Avi to cope with the cleaner problem, but Avi refused. Shavit did not fire him, to avoid the stigma of a failed appointment, and Zelikovich, the Merkaz CEO, retained Shavit for the same reason, despite heavy losses and damages. Thus, unlike the findings of Raes, Bruch and De Jong (2013), this TMT teamwork was detrimental. Only a year later did Shavit and Avi leave, seemingly according to *rotatzia*, without the stigma of failure and firing, and soon advanced elsewhere. But Zelikovich was no altruist either; had he fired the paralyzed Shavit, whom he had appointed, aside from damaging his own prestige, he would have lost a loyalist on Merkaz's Board, which was why he appointed him to begin with (Shapira, 1987).

However, how did intelligent and resourceful Shavit nominate, Avi despite knowing that he was just Thomas's aide? Shavit discerned Thomas's advantageous expertise over Avi's, but not Avi's ignorance, due to his own (Kruger & Dunning, 1999). Intelligent, good-looking and well-spoken, Avi's adeptness at ingratiating himself with superiors created a false image and Shavit, without trustful open communication with others who knew the truth, missed this. Neither Shavit nor Danton knew how miserably Avi had failed during Yuval's period, and plant functioning due to Thomas's leadership misled them about Avi's skills. Other misleading factors were the prevalence of "parachuted" *pe'ilim* in the kibbutz field which some succeeded like Thomas, and their career successes despite CMI (Shapira, 1995a, 2001, 2008).

#### 4.5. CMI Executives Rule: Served by CMI Loyalists While Knowledgeable Involved Managers Prevented Total Failure

The folk saying, "The fish stinks from the head" can apply to CMI executives: Seeking self-serving power their low morality degrades morality throughout the hierarchy (Jackall, 1988; Lewis, 2011; Stein, 2001), and encourages CMI. Executives can gain power by success and innovative breakthroughs, but these are risky. For instance, R&D requires empowering experts who may use power to enhance their own prestige and authority, rather than a firm's aims, or even worse, leave it and use innovation developed on its premises to establish a competitor (Rifkin & Harrar, 1988: Ch. 10). Promoting loyalists who owe their advancement to them empowers executives without these risks (Hirschman, 1970). This explained the prevalence of "parachuted" *pe'ilim* adopting CMI under CEOs' oligarchic rule (Michels, 1959[1915]): Avi was "parachuted" instead of promoting the expert heir-apparent, because ignorant young bosses feared the latter's power, while these bosses had been "parachuted" to jobs after an oligarchic CEO permitted old Moav extra continuity that pushed out his knowledgeable effective

deputies, one of whom could have been a successful successor. However, such one would have enjoyed much power, because of his successes and would not have become a staunch CEO loyalist, as Moav was. Hence, the CEO retained Moav until matters became intolerable, and then Yuval replaced him, as the detached, ignorant CEO missed Yuval's dismal failures as a deputy, while he was a prospective loyalist on the Board of Directors.

The gin plant managers emulated their appointers, Merkaz CEOs who "parachuted" loyalist *pe'ilim* or prospective loyalists to top jobs, to gain power rather than promoting successful insiders who could manage effectively, but were more powerful. This practice was common in inter-kibbutz organizations (Shapira, 2001, 2008, 2013) as elsewhere (Khurana, 2002). Ignorant CEOs and executives ruled regional cooperatives for decades, primarily because whenever a threat of total failure became imminent due to Shavit- and Avi-like failures, knowledgeable replacements were soon found in kibbutzim, and came to the rescue, as did Thomas (Shapira, 1987, 1995b). Their successes were provisional; sooner or later their rising power was seen as a menace to superiors' power, and they were suppressed and left. New outsiders were imported, mostly choosing CMI and failed. Then came rescuers, succeeded, gained power, were suppressed, and left. This seesaw enabled dysfunctional rule by ignorant CEOs over plants with mediocre functioning for long periods, but kibbutz research ignored the study of inter-kibbutz firms, in accord with oligarchic leaders' whims, helping ignoring this major problem (Shapira, 2005, 2008).

## 5. Conclusions, Discussion, and Suggestions

The unique semi-native longitudinal ethnography untangled CMI and explained dysfunctional executives' rule by survival strategies of outsider managers through detachment and/or seduction-coercion that caused vicious distrust and ignorance cycles. CMI engendered major failures both directly by mistaken decisions and wrong actions, and indirectly by negative selection and promotion of employees, missing or ignoring their wrongs and mistakes because of distrust, secrecy, ignorance, incompetence, and self-serving information abuses. However, an ignorant boss might not fail if mid-levelers opt for vulnerable involvement and are allowed discretion for creating virtuous trust and learning cycles, resulting in high-trust cultures within their jurisdictions, despite bosses' distrustful CMI. But as such bosses missed how ignorant they were (Kruger & Dunning, 1999) they missed employees' ignorance, mistakes, and neglect. Worse still, they engendered, distrust and ignorance cycles, lacking interactional expertise (Collins & Evans, 2007), the languages of local practices (Collins, 2011), and pertinent experience to acquire tacit know-how and *phronesis* (D'Eredita & Barreto, 2006); nor did they discern the ignorance of ingratiating boot-lickers, trusting the latter at their peril.

My findings support research reiterating the decisiveness of local knowledge (Fine, 2012) and the critique of managerial knowledge portability (Kotter, 1982; Townley, 2002), as well as the decisiveness of mutual trust between employees and superiors (Fox, 1974); they indicate common and problematic CMI: Well-trained and educated managers but "parachuted" with largely irrelevant prior experience, habitus of detachment, and little or no pertinent expertise chose CMI, surviving in their jobs for years and advancing careers despite major mistakes, wrong decisions or indecision, and dismal failures. Ignorant bosses ruled by importing their kind and retaining loyalists, rather than promoting talented expert insiders deemed too powerful. Plants' non-competitive supply and marketing and some well-functioning mid-levelers prevented total failure, facilitating executives' belief that CMI was inconsequential. While the ignorant executive hardly knew how ignorant importees would remain due to opting for CMI, he could safely rely on their loyal servility, being powerless and dependent on his backing unlike knowledgeable insiders. Advancement by ingratiation and loyal servility based on various subterfuges rather than performance enhanced CMI, as did the kibbutz *rotatzia* (rotation) norm that shortened terms, making learning local knowledge less worthwhile.

Contrary to Raes et al.'s (2013) optimism concerning TMT functioning, ignorant TMTs ruled mediocre functioning plants by CMI, and when they failed they collaboratively camouflaged and concealed failures (Dalton, 1959; Hase et al., 2006). If failures threatened executive jobs, knowledgeable outsiders were called to the rescue, but their successes preserved the rule of ignorant executives, who eventually suppressed them. Like classic Greek tragedies, suppression was unavoidable: Rescuers were empowered by their successes for which they had come, while ignorant executives who lost power regained it by suppressing rescuers, eventually to their peril culminating in job loss.

My findings prove the immense potential of ethnographing executives for explaining corporate functioning which hitherto anthropologists failed to accomplish (Welker et al., 2011: p. S5). They contradict Cole et al.'s

(2009) findings of the positive effects of distant leadership, and support Carroll et al.'s (2008) critique of the competency paradigm in leadership studies: Competences such as education and intelligence often enhanced executives' distancing, power abuses, and ignorance concealment. Previous research supports the finding that successful industrial leadership is dependent on virtuous trust and learning cycles engendered by vulnerably involved leaders, while research missed its opposite, prolonged detrimental dysfunctional rule by educated and experienced executives whose detached and/or seductive-coercive CMI defended their status and power. The untangling of CMI charted self-enhancing vicious distrust cycles, while both these cycles and their opposites accentuated the pivotal role played by trust in managers' decisive choices. This finding points to much needed study of both managerial trustful and distrustful practices.

The finding that new leaders who suffer less knowledge gaps tend to trustful involvement supports recent works that found insider CEOs preferable due to less such gaps. However, since by vulnerable involvement outsiders can achieve "insiderness" as well, the yardsticks that seem best for forecasting which outsiders will achieve it are:

- 1) Those with a vulnerable involvement habitus,
- 2) Those with pertinent referred and interactional expertises,
- 3) Those with prospects of trusting relations with employees, due to previous successful servant transformational leadership.

These yardsticks may be useful for both choosing among outsider candidates and for comparing them to insiders, but as their relative importance in forecasting who among insiders and outsiders will avoid CMI may differ, further study of this question is suggested.

Second, vulnerable involvement has multiple effects (Shapira, 2013); thus, further study is required to ascertain their relative importance in various situations, to help executives use their limited time and efforts effectively. For example: Expertise in some domains of a newly promoted insider means "outsiderness" in others, in which vulnerable involvement may engender a virtuous trust and learning cycle; however, can s/he devote all the time required for this involvement, and still retain virtuous trust and learning cycles in other domains?

Further study is also suggested of the factors that impact the choice between vulnerable involvement and detachment/seductive-coercive control, especially the first two of the following:

- a) The extent of pertinent know-how, *phronesis*, interactional, and referred expertises.
- b) The extent of having a habitus of vulnerable involvement aimed at learning.
- c) Career prospects with either vulnerable involvement or detached/coercive CMI.
- d) Organizational contexts that encourage one choice or the other.

The relative weight of each of the four factors has yet to be studied. It seems that the first two have especially impacted involved mid-levelers; the first and third have impacted detached mid-levelers more, while the third and fourth have impacted executives; but further research is required for firm conclusions. Further research is also needed to identify other factors which may be decisive in other contexts than that studied, such as salaries, which were uniform for *pe'ilim* and hence ignored here.

Another question concerning the choice between vulnerable involvement and CMI is managers' and employees' mutual impacts on choice continuity. For instance, an outsider may choose involvement and trusting locals who in turn may try to teach him, but if he is too ignorant and/or foolish and fails to learn, his failure induces them to stop trying. It is plausible that he will then regress to CMI, but this is open to further study.

Of major importance are the cultural effects of CMI: The full ethnography adds other major cultural effects of contrasting the practices of CMI to knowledgeable managers, and those of low- vs. high-trust local cultures. Anthropologists should allude to these cultural effects when studying CMI, while with so many organizational failures around us these days, all researchers and practitioners need to untangle the negative impact of CMI. Future research must address negative managerial practices with more ethnographic studies, revealing useful insights and guarding against managerial biases.

Last but not least, much organizational research was found to be superficial; such were inconclusive succession studies that used the formal status of insider/outsider as a major variable, while the choice between contrasting practices by both insiders and outsiders was the decisive variable. My study have exposed this decisiveness, because it was phronetic, it sought a concrete, practical, and ethical answer to a troubling question concerning outsider executive rule of major organizations in my society, much as the Aalborg Project was for Flyvbjerg (2001, 2006). He persevered, studying the project for years (Flyvbjerg, 2001: Ch. 10), and so did I, and as he first published in Danish to help his society (Flyvbjerg, 2001: p. 159), so did I (Shapira, 1987). Thus,

my study supports his call for the social sciences to abandon efforts to follow the natural sciences by epistemic studies seeking grand theories, in favour of phronetic studies seeking for instance the impact of actors' know-how and *phronesis* that offer smaller theories to solve concrete problems.

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