



## DEVELOPING TRANSITIONAL-TRANSFORMATIVE LEADERSHIP IN COMPLEX ADAPTIVE DYNAMIC SYSTEMS: INSIGHTS FROM WINNICOTT AND BOLLAS

### DESENVOLVENDO LIDERANÇA TRANSICIONAL-TRANSFORMATIVA EM SISTEMAS DINÂMICOS ADAPTATIVOS COMPLEXOS: *INSIGHTS* DE WINNICOTT E BOLLAS

Anderson de Souza Sant'Anna<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** This article proposes a transitional-transformative approach for leadership development in complex and dynamic contexts, integrating insights from psychoanalysts Christopher Bollas and Donald Woods Winnicott. Utilizing a comprehensive review of literature from databases Web of Science and EBSCO, covering the period from 2000 to 2023, this study explores the concepts of “transformative space” and “transitional space”. These concepts highlight the critical role of early emotional and relational experiences, creativity, imagination, and environmental interactions in shaping leadership potential. This integration provides a strategic framework for leadership development, offering practical applications for navigating organizational challenges.

**Keywords:** Leadership; Dynamic Leadership; Transitional Leadership; Transformative Leadership; Leadership Development.

**Resumo:** Este artigo propõe uma abordagem transicional-transformativa para o desenvolvimento de liderança em contextos complexos e dinâmicos, integrando percepções dos psicanalistas Christopher Bollas e Donald Woods Winnicott. Por meio de revisão de literatura envolvendo as bases de dados Web of Science e EBSCO, no período de 2000 a 2023, este estudo explora os conceitos de “espaço transformativo” e “espaço transicional”. Tais conceitos destacam o papel crítico de experiências emocionais e relacionais, criatividade, imaginação e interações ambientais no desenvolvimento do potencial de liderança, ao permitir uma estrutura estratégica para o seu desenvolvimento e exercício. Isto, por meio da proposição de *framework* prático de aplicação.

**Palavras-chave:** Liderança; Liderança Dinâmica; Liderança Transitória; Liderança Transformadora; Desenvolvimento de Liderança.

## 1 Introdução

The contributions of Christopher Bollas and Donald Woods Winnicott to studies on leadership have garnered increasing attention from scholars in recent years (Kets de Vries; Florent-Treacy; Korotov, 2013; Wallerstein, 2006; Armstrong, 2005). Bollas, a British psychoanalyst known for his unique approach to clinical practice and his contributions to psychoanalytic theory, developed the concept of the “transformative

---

<sup>1</sup> Doutor em Administração e Doutor em Arquitetura e Urbanismo, Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais (UFMG). Professor Adjunto do Departamento de Administração Geral e Recursos Humanos, Fundação Getúlio Vargas (FGV-EAESP), São Paulo, SP, Brasil. E-mail: [anderson.santanna@fgv.br](mailto:anderson.santanna@fgv.br)



space” (Bollas, 1987), which emphasizes the psychological environment in which an individual’s psychic material can be transformed.

On the other hand, Winnicott, a renowned British pediatrician, and psychoanalyst is best known for his groundbreaking work on child development and object relations theory, including the concept of the “transitional space” (Winnicott, 1971), which refers to an intermediate area between the inner and outer worlds, where a child uses a transitional object to help bridge the gap between self and other.

Both Bollas (1987) and Winnicott (1971, 1965, 1953) emphasize the importance of emotional and relational experiences in the formation of personality and the self. They highlight the significance of creativity and imagination in psychological life and stress the importance of understanding the patient’s subjectivity in psychoanalytic analysis.

Additionally, they both emphasize the importance of the environment in the development of the individual. Bollas (1987) expands on Winnicott’s concept of the “holding environment” to apply to the psychoanalytic process, emphasizing the importance of a holding environment for the therapeutic relationship to be effective.

By exploring the potential for integrating Bollas (transformative space) and Winnicott’s contributions (transitional space), one hopes to deepen the understanding of dynamic leadership (Uhl-Bien, 2021; Uhl-Bien; Arena, 2017), with important implications for leadership in complex systems, where the ability to form and maintain relationships, build trust, and foster a sense of belonging is essential.

Specifically, it sheds light on the individual’s relationship with their environment and the continuous process of adaptation and change, providing valuable insights into the role of early experiences and relationships in shaping an individual’s development and capacity for leadership.

Moreover, their work highlights the importance of ongoing adaptation and development in effective leadership, emphasizing the importance of both conscious and unconscious processes, as well as the role of early experiences in shaping leadership potential.

In essence, by examining the relevance of Bollas (1987) and Winnicott (1971, 1965, 1953)’s ideas in contemporary discussions on leadership, this article aims to propose a “transitional-transformative” approach to leadership development in complex and dynamic contexts. Through this approach, one intention to contribute to an effective leadership development strategy that leaders can navigate in complex, ever-changing environments.



Methodologically, the study extends beyond a traditional narrative review by critically engaging with the literature through a reflective theoretical lens. It explores how the psychoanalytic concepts developed by Bollas (1987) and Winnicott (1971, 1965, 1953) can be operationalized within leadership frameworks, thereby providing not just a review of existing theories but a novel synthesis relevant to current leadership challenges. This narrative literature review began with a thorough search of Web of Science and EBSCO databases, covering publications from 2000 to 2023. This timeframe was chosen to ensure that the review incorporated both seminal and contemporary perspectives on leadership in complex and dynamic systems. The search criteria involved keywords such as “leadership in complex adaptive systems”, “complex leadership”, “dynamic leadership”, “adaptive environment”, “adaptive space”, and the names of the theorists themselves, ensuring a comprehensive collection of relevant academic sources.

In addition to the literature review, the article proposes a theoretical framework critically evaluated against the requirements and challenges of leading in complex adaptive systems, emphasizing the practical implications and potential applications of the integrated concepts.

This methodological approach not only enriches the academic discourse on leadership but also ensures that the theoretical propositions are grounded in extensive scholarly research, providing a robust foundation for future empirical studies to test and validate the proposed leadership model in diverse organizational settings. The comprehensive nature of the literature review and the analytical depth of the framework development are designed to advance our understanding of how psychoanalytical theories can inform and transform leadership practices in real-world scenarios.

Quanto à sua relevância, em termos teóricos, while leadership in complex adaptive systems is previously studied, the integration of psychoanalytic insights, particularly those of Bollas (1987) and Winnicott (1971, 1965, 1953), offers a unique perspective on the emotional and relational dynamics essential for effective leadership. This study addresses the critical challenge of how organizations and leaders can foster environments that nurture both individual and organizational adaptability and resilience in the face of rapid changes and uncertainties typical of complex systems.

Practically, the integration of Bollas’ concept of the “transformative space” and Winnicott’s ‘transitional phenomena’ into leadership development programs can provide leaders with the tools to foster environments that enhance creativity and resilience among teams. For instance, leadership training can incorporate modules on creating



psychological safety, enabling leaders to facilitate spaces where team members feel free to innovate and express divergent ideas without fear of repercussions.

The findings of this study have also the potential to reshape organizational strategies by advocating for leadership approaches that are deeply attuned to the psychological and emotional dimensions of organizational life. Such approaches can lead to the development of leadership policies that prioritize relational dynamics and emotional well-being, fostering a work environment conducive to long-term sustainability and growth.

Lastly, regarding its structure, this article is organized as follows: Section 1 introduces the theoretical underpinnings of Bollas and Winnicott's contributions to understanding dynamic leadership contexts. Section 2 discusses the methodologies employed in this narrative review, including the databases and search terms used. Section 3 delves into the practical applications of these theories in organizational settings, and Section 4 concludes with a discussion on the implications for future research and practice in leadership development.

## **2 Theoretical Background**

In this section, one explores the contributions of Christopher Bollas, focusing on his concept of “transformative space” which illuminates the psychoanalytical perspective on leadership dynamics within complex systems (Bollas, 1987). Additionally, one examines Donald Woods Winnicott's theories, particularly his notion of “transitional space” and its impact on leadership development (Winnicott, 1965). Each subsection aims to bridge these psychoanalytical theories with contemporary leadership challenges, providing a foundational understanding for the practical applications discussed later in the article.

### **2.1 Leadership in Dynamic and complex adaptive systems**

Complex adaptive systems (CAS) refer to systems composed of numerous interacting components that adapt and evolve. These systems are characterized by their non-linear dynamics, where small changes in one part of the system can have significant effects on the whole system. CAS can be found in various fields, such as biology, ecology, economics, and social systems (Uhl-Bien; Arena, 2017; Uhl-Bien; Marion; McKelvey, 2007; Uhl-Bien, 2006).



They also are characterized by their emergent properties, meaning that the behavior of the system cannot be predicted solely by examining the behavior of its components. Instead, the behavior arises from the interactions between the components and their environment. CAS is also characterized by feedback loops, where the outputs of the system influence its inputs, leading to further adaptation and evolution (Holland, 1995; Levin, 1999; Waldrop, 1992).

In this sense, leadership in complex adaptive systems requires a dynamic and adaptive approach that can respond to the constantly changing and unpredictable environment. In this context, traditional leadership models that emphasize top-down control and planning are often insufficient. Instead, leaders must be able to navigate the complex interactions between the components of the system and facilitate the emergence of desirable outcomes (Snowden; Boone, 2007; Uhl-Bien; Marion; McKelvey, 2007; Wheatley, 1999).

As a result, the dynamic leadership in CAS involves creating a culture of continuous learning and adaptation, where experimentation, innovation, and creativity are encouraged. Leaders must also be able to balance the need for stability and predictability with the need for flexibility and agility. This requires a deep understanding of the system and its components, as well as the ability to monitor and respond to feedback (Uhl-Bien, 2021; Snowden; Boone, 2007; Uhl-Bien; Marion; McKelvey, 2007; Wheatley, 1999).

Leaders in CAS must also be able to build and maintain strong relationships with the members of the system, including followers, stakeholders, and other external players. These relationships must be based on trust, communication, and collaboration, and should promote the co-creation of solutions that benefit the system (Uhl-Bien; Arena, 2018; Wheatley, 1999).

In this way, dynamic leadership in complex adaptive systems involves leading in an environment that is constantly changing and evolving. This type of leadership requires a different set of skills and competencies than traditional leadership models, as it involves adapting to uncertainty, ambiguity, and rapidly changing conditions (Eoyang; Holladay, 2013; Stacey, 2010; Uhl-Bien; Marion; McKelvey, 2007; Snowden; Boone, 2007).

In this context, the studies of Bolas (1987) and Winnicott (1965) on the environment are significant to the study of leadership in complex adaptive systems. Both Winnicott's concept of the "holding environment" and Bolas' concept of the "secret life of objects" highlight the importance of the environment in shaping the subjective experiences of individuals and their interactions with others. In complex adaptive



systems, the environment plays a critical role in shaping the behavior of individuals and groups, and leaders must be able to understand and navigate the complex dynamics of these systems.

Winnicott's concept of "emotional holding" emphasizes the importance of a safe and supportive environment for personal growth and development. In the context of leadership in complex adaptive systems, leaders must create a holding environment that promotes creativity, innovation, and adaptive behavior. By providing a safe and supportive environment for their followers, leaders can foster a culture of continuous learning and personal growth, which is essential in complex and changing environments.

Bollas' concept of the secret life of objects highlights the role of unconscious processes in shaping individual behavior and interactions. In the context of leadership in complex adaptive systems, leaders must be able to understand the underlying cultural and organizational dynamics that shape behavior and interactions. By exploring the secret life of objects, leaders can gain a deeper understanding of the cultural and organizational context in which they operate and develop strategies for navigating complex adaptive systems.

## **2.2 Bollas' transformative phenomena**

The concept of transformative phenomena, developed by Bollas, is central to his psychoanalytic theory. It refers to a space within the therapeutic relationship where patients can experience transformation and growth through the exploration of unconscious aspects of their psyche. According to the author, the "transformative space" is created by the analyst's ability to provide an environment that allows patients to feel safe and supported while also challenging their assumptions and encouraging them to confront their fears and anxieties (Bollas, 1987).

In contemporary leadership studies, the concept of transformative space can be applied to the role of leaders as facilitators of transformation and growth within their organizations (Uhl-Bien, 2021; Uhl-Bien; Arena, 2017).

Leaders can create a space fostering creativity and innovation, encouraging employees to take risks and explore new ideas. By providing a supportive environment that encourages learning and growth, leaders can help their employees become more engaged and invested in their work, leading to improved performance and increased job satisfaction (Uhl-Bien, 2021; Uhl-Bien; Arena, 2017).



The concept of transformative space can also be applied to the relationship between leaders and their followers. Just as the psychoanalytic analyst creates a transformative space for the patient, the leader can create a space for their followers that allows them to explore their potential and experience growth and transformation.

By providing a supportive environment and encouraging open communication, leaders can foster a sense of trust and collaboration among their followers, leading to increased engagement and improved organizational outcomes. Other concepts developed by Bollas, such as the “unthought-known”, the creative unconscious, and the secret life of objects, may also be relevant to leadership studies (Bollas, 1987).

According to Bollas (1987), the unthought known refers to a dimension of the psyche that is not yet conscious but is actively shaping an individual’s thoughts, behaviors, and experiences. It represents a dynamic tension between what we know and what one does not know about ourselves and the world around us (Bollas, 1987).

In the context of leadership in complex adaptive systems, the unthought-known can play a crucial role in shaping an individual’s understanding of the system’s dynamics, the interdependencies between its elements, and the potential for change and adaptation. Leaders who are attuned to the unthought-known can develop a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the system’s challenges and opportunities, as well as their own biases, assumptions, and limitations.

By acknowledging the existence and influence of the unthought-known, leaders can open themselves up to new perspectives and possibilities, challenge their assumptions and biases, and engage in more flexible and adaptive approaches to leadership. They can also foster a culture of learning and innovation, where individuals are encouraged to explore and reflect on their own unthoughts and contribute to the collective understanding of the system.

The Bollas’ concept of the “creative unconscious” (Bollas, 1987), in turn, refers to the idea that creativity arises from the unconscious mind, which is the repository of our personal experiences, memories, fantasies, and emotions.

To Bollas (1987), the creative unconscious is the source of our unique and original ideas, as it enables us to access and combine our personal experiences and emotions in novel ways. In the context of leadership in complex adaptive systems, the concept of the creative unconscious can be applied to understand how leaders can tap into their unconscious to generate innovative and adaptive solutions to complex challenges.





By accessing their creative unconscious, leaders can draw on their personal experiences and emotions to develop new ideas and strategies that are tailored to the specific needs of their organization or team. Moreover, leaders can also foster the creative unconscious of their followers by creating an environment that encourages risk-taking, experimentation, and open communication.

This can be achieved by creating a culture of psychological safety, where individuals feel comfortable sharing their ideas and perspectives without fear of negative consequences. By doing so, leaders can leverage the creative potential of their team and create a more innovative and adaptive organization.

Finally, Bollas' concept of the "secret life of objects" refers to the idea that objects can have a profound emotional impact on individuals, and that these emotional attachments can be an important part of one's sense of self and identity (Bollas, 1987).

The author argues that objects, particularly those that have personal meaning and history, are not just inanimate things but possess a kind of "life" intimately tied to our own experiences and memories. In the context of leadership in complex adaptive systems, the concept of the secret life of objects can be applied in several ways.

For example, leaders can pay attention to the objects and physical spaces within the organization, recognizing that they may hold important symbolic and emotional meanings for employees. By understanding the role of these objects and spaces, leaders can create a more positive and supportive organizational culture.

Leaders can also use the concept of the secret life of objects to foster creativity and innovation within the organization. By encouraging employees to explore their emotional connections to objects and to think creatively about how those objects might be repurposed or used in new ways, leaders can help to generate new ideas and approaches.

In addition, the concept of the secret life of objects can be used to promote a sense of shared identity and purpose within the organization. By recognizing the emotional attachments that individuals have to certain objects or spaces, leaders can help to create a sense of belonging and shared history that can be a powerful motivator for individuals and teams alike.

Therefore, Bollas' concepts of creative unconscious, transformative space and the secret life of objects can provide valuable insights into the sources of creativity and innovation in leadership in complex adaptive systems.





For instance, Bollas' concept of creative unconscious emphasizes the importance of unconscious processes in generating creative and innovative ideas. This can be applied in dynamic leadership, where collaboration and diversity are key to innovation.

Similarly, the concept of transformative space can help leaders create a safe and stimulating psychological environment for creativity and innovation.

Lastly, Bollas' concept of the secret life of objects can also be used to understand the relationship between material objects and organizational culture. By considering how objects are used, interpreted, and modified by members of the organization, leaders can gain a deeper understanding of organizational culture and use it to improve adaptation and change in complex adaptive systems.

### **2.3 Winnicott's transitional phenomena**

As a pediatrician and psychoanalyst, Winnicott made significant contributions to the field of early individual development and psychoanalytic theory, developing several key concepts that continue to be relevant and influential in contemporary psychoanalytic and developmental psychology.

As previously mentioned, one of Winnicott's most well-known concepts is the theory of transitional phenomena. According to Winnicott, it is an intermediate area of experience between the inner reality of the individual and the external reality of the world. This transitional environment is characterized by play, creativity, and the use of transitional objects, such as stuffed animals or blankets, which serve as a bridge between the internal and external worlds (Winnicott, 1971, 1965, 1953).

Another important concept developed by Winnicott (1965) is "emotional holding". This concept refers to the emotional and physical environment that provides the necessary support for an individual's growth and development. In this environment, the individual feels safe and supported, which allows for the exploration and experimentation necessary for development (Winnicott, 1971).

Winnicott (1971) also emphasized the importance of "potential space", which refers to the space of exploration and experimentation that is created by the holding environment. Potential space allows individuals to experiment with different aspects of themselves and the world, leading to creativity and personal growth.

The concepts of the "true self" and the "false self" are another key concept developed by Winnicott (1953). The true self refers to the individual's innate, authentic



sense of self, while the false self is a defensive structure that is created in response to external pressures or demands. According to Winnicott (1960), the false self can become dominant in individuals who have not had the necessary support and holding environment for the development of the true self.

In addition, Winnicott (1971, 1958) emphasized the importance of the creative use of objects (“play”). According to this concept, the use of objects creatively and playfully can promote growth and development by allowing individuals to experiment with different aspects of themselves and the world.

In the context of leadership, “transitional space” can be seen as a metaphor for the space between the individual and the organization, or between the individual and the larger system in which they operate. This space is where creativity and innovation can occur, where individuals can experiment and explore new ideas and ways of doing things. By understanding and creating this space, leaders can foster an environment that encourages personal growth and development, creativity, and innovation, which are essential for achievement in complex and changing environments.

Besides that, his concept of emotional holding can be seen as an important instrument to the organizational culture and climate development, which sets the tone for the emotional and social environment in which individuals operate. By creating a holding environment that is supportive, nurturing, and safe, leaders can facilitate the development of their followers and promote the growth and success of the organization.

### **3 Integrating transitional and transformative backgrounds**

Bollas and Winnicott’s concepts can complement each other in a way that allows for a more comprehensive approach to dynamic leadership. Bollas’ transformative space concept emphasizes the importance of the therapeutic relationship and the creation of a safe environment for transformation and growth. Meanwhile, Winnicott’s transitional space concept highlights the role of play and creativity in the development of the self.

In the context of dynamic leadership, these concepts can work together to create a psychologically safe environment that encourages play and creativity, while also fostering transformation and growth. By creating a transformative space that incorporates aspects of transitional space, leaders can promote a culture of innovation and adaptation while also building strong interpersonal relationships with their followers.

Furthermore, Winnicott's idea of emotional holding can be useful in understanding the role of the leader in providing support and containment for followers during times of stress and uncertainty. This concept can be integrated with Bollas' transformative space to create a more holistic approach to leadership that considers the emotional needs of followers as well as the need for innovation and adaptation in complex systems (Table 1).

**Table 1:** Transitional-Transformative Leadership Development Background

| <b>Dynamic Leadership</b>                                  | <b>Transitional Background</b> | <b>Transformative Background</b> |
|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Emphasizes adaptation and collaboration in complex systems | Transitional Environment       | Transformative Space             |
| Navigates complexity, uncertainty, and constant change     | Transitional Phenomena         | Unthought Known                  |
| Fosters creativity and innovation                          | Play                           | Creative Unconscious             |
| Emphasizes interpersonal relationships and trust           | Emotional Holding              | Therapeutic Relationship         |
| Values diversity and inclusivity                           | False Self                     | Identity and Subjectivity        |
| Encourages continuous learning and growth                  | Potential Space                | Secret Life of Objects           |
| Collaboration between leaders and followers                |                                | Self-Experience                  |

**Source:** Elaborated by the author.

### 3.1 Transitional environment vs. transformative space

The concept of the "transitional environment" by Winnicott (1965) and "transformative space" by Bollas (1987) both highlight the role of the environment in fostering growth and development, especially in the context of psychotherapy.

On the other hand, Bollas' transformative space is a broader concept that refers to the therapeutic relationship between the analyst and the patient. It is a space in which the unconscious can be explored and transformed, and new meanings can emerge. The transformative space is characterized by a sense of safety, trust, and openness, providing a supportive environment for personal growth and change.

While both concepts emphasize the importance of the environment in promoting growth and development, the transitional environment is more focused on the early individual's development and the importance of play, while the transformative space is more focused on the therapeutic relationship and the importance of exploring the unconscious.

However, both concepts share the idea that a safe and supportive environment is necessary for growth and transformation. The main difference between them lies in their focus. While Winnicott's transitional space emphasizes the importance of the



environment and the objects within it in facilitating the early individual's development, Bollas' transformative space places more emphasis on the role of the therapeutic relationship in fostering transformation and growth.

Integrating these concepts in the context of leadership can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the importance of the environment and the relationship between the leader and followers in fostering creativity and growth. Leaders can create a transformative space in which followers feel safe to explore and experiment with new ideas, while also providing a sense of structure and stability, like Winnicott's transitional space.

In this way, the integration of them can provide a more holistic approach to leadership, recognizing the importance of both the environment and the therapeutic relationship in facilitating creativity, growth, and adaptation in complex adaptive systems.

### **3.2 Transitional phenomena vs. unthought known**

Despite their differences, "transitional space" (Winnicott, 1965) and "unthought-known" (Bollas, 1987) concepts share an emphasis on the importance of subjective experience and personal meaning in shaping behavior and perception. Transitional phenomena and the unthought-known both reflect the idea that our inner experiences and unconscious processes can have a significant impact on our external behavior and interactions with the world around us.

Articulating these concepts into a dynamic leadership approach can involve using transitional objects or experiences as a means of accessing the unthought-known and exploring unconscious processes. By paying attention to these subjective experiences and the meanings they hold, leaders may gain deeper insights into their behavior and the behavior of those they lead, leading to more effective and authentic leadership practices.

In terms of their potential relevance to leadership, the notion of "transitional phenomena" can be seen as highlighting the importance of creating a safe and nurturing environment in which individuals can explore their inner worlds and develop their capacities for creativity and innovation.

Similarly, the concept of the unthought known can be seen as emphasizing the need for leaders to be open to unexpected insights and ideas, and to cultivate their capacities for creative and intuitive thinking.



Depending on the context and objectives of the analysis, these concepts can be used to explore the sources of creativity and innovation in leadership, as well as to understand the unconscious and interpersonal processes that influence decision-making and problem-solving in complex adaptive systems.

In practical terms, their integration into a dynamic leadership approach (transitional-transformative approach) can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by leaders in complex and constantly changing environments.

### **3.3 Play vs. creative unconscious**

Despite the differences, the concepts of “play” (Winnicott, 1971) and “creative unconscious” (Bollas, 1987) highlight the importance of unconscious processes in creativity and suggest that a playful, exploratory, and open-minded attitude can foster innovation and change.

Integrating these concepts into a dynamic leadership approach can involve fostering an environment that encourages play and spontaneity while also valuing the role of unconscious processes in creativity and innovation. Leaders can facilitate a culture of experimentation, risk-taking, and open-mindedness that allows for the emergence of new ideas and possibilities. They can also encourage self-reflection and introspection to access the unconscious processes that drive creativity and innovation.

Moreover, by integrating these concepts, they can adopt a more holistic and integrative approach to problem-solving and decision-making. They can explore and consider multiple perspectives and possibilities, leveraging the creative potential of the group and the collective unconscious.

### **3.4 Emotional holding vs. therapeutic relationship**

While both concepts – “emotional holding” (Winnicott, 1965) and “therapeutic relationship” – focus on the importance of emotional and relational factors in personal development and well-being, they differ in their specific contexts and applications. Emotional holding is primarily associated with the early stages of life, while the therapeutic relationship is associated with the psychoanalytic process.

However, they share the common thread of highlighting the importance of emotional support and connection in fostering growth and transformation. Therefore,

their integration can provide a valuable framework for understanding the role of emotional support and connection in the development of effective leadership in complex adaptive systems.

Both are important to understand the dynamics of leadership in complex adaptive systems. While Winnicott's concept of holding emphasizes the importance of a safe and emotionally supportive environment for personal development and growth, Bollas' concept of therapeutic relationship highlights the significance of the therapeutic relationship in promoting psychological transformation and personal growth.

In the context of dynamic leadership, this integration can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by leaders in creating safe and stimulating environments for creativity, innovation, and continuous learning.

Additionally, building an effective therapeutic relationship with followers can help promote the engagement and commitment of employees, as well as facilitate conflict resolution and decision-making in complex environments.

These concepts can also be applied to understanding the importance of leadership as a relational process (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Effective leadership requires a deep and sensitive understanding of followers' needs and perspectives, as well as the ability to establish an authentic and meaningful connection with them.

Once more, through the integration of these concepts, leaders can create a work environment that promotes emotional well-being, mutual trust, and personal development, fostering the commitment and loyalty of employees.

### **3. 5 False self vs. identity and subjectivity**

Despite the conceptual differences, both "false self" (Winnicott, 1965) and "identity and subjectivity" (Bollas, 1987) can be applied in the study of leadership and organizational behavior. For instance, the false self can help explain how leaders may adopt a persona or mask to conform to organizational expectations or to maintain a particular image.

Meanwhile, the concept of identity and subjectivity can provide insights into how leaders' identities are shaped by the organizational context and how they, in turn, influence the organization's culture and values.

Furthermore, the integration of these concepts can help leaders develop a more authentic and self-aware approach to leadership, which acknowledges the importance of



both individual identity and the relational context in which leadership occurs. By recognizing and integrating their true selves with their organizational roles, leaders can foster a more supportive and empowering environment that promotes personal growth, well-being, and organizational effectiveness.

It is worth noting that the concepts of false self and identity and subjectivity are also relevant in understanding the role of leadership in shaping organizational culture and values. The false self-concept highlights the potential for individuals to adopt a persona or mask to meet external expectations and fit into the culture of the organization, potentially leading to a loss of authenticity and personal fulfillment.

On the other hand, the identity and subjectivity concept emphasize the importance of recognizing and valuing individual differences and subjective experiences in the formation of organizational culture and values.

Integrating these concepts into a dynamic leadership approach can help leaders cultivate a culture that values authenticity and individuality while also promoting a shared sense of purpose and direction. By recognizing and nurturing the authentic selves of employees and promoting a sense of shared identity, leaders can foster a culture that promotes innovation, creativity, and a strong sense of community.

### **3.6 Potential space vs. secret life of objects**

Both concepts – “potential space” (Winnicott, 1965) and the “secret life of objects” (Bollas, 1979) – can be applied in the context of leadership, as they highlight the importance of creating a space for creativity and innovation. The potential space can be used by leaders to facilitate a safe and supportive environment for exploring new ideas, while the secret life of objects can provide insights into the underlying cultural meanings of material objects in the workplace.

However, there are some differences between the two concepts. While the potential space is focused on the transitional space between internal and external reality, the secret life of objects is more concerned with the exploration of the unconscious meanings of material objects.

Additionally, the potential space is more focused on the individual’s internal experience, while the secret life of objects is more focused on the cultural and collective meanings of objects.





It is worth noting that these concepts can also be applied to understanding the dynamics of organizational culture and identity. The concept of potential space can help leaders create an environment that fosters creativity and innovation, while the concept of the secret life of objects can provide insights into how objects and material culture shape and are shaped by organizational culture.

By integrating these concepts into a dynamic leadership approach, leaders can better understand and navigate the complex dynamics of organizational culture and identity, leading to more effective and adaptive leadership in today's complex and rapidly changing environments.

### **3.7 Potential space vs. self-experience**

As previously described, the concept of “potential space” in Winnicott's theory and Bollas' concept of “self-experience” share the notion that the self is formed concerning the environment and that the potential for growth and transformation exists in the space between internal and external reality.

However, while potential space emphasizes the role of play and creativity in the formation of the self, the notion of self-experience highlights the importance of the individual's subjective experience and the internal world in shaping their sense of self. It can also be added that both emphasize the importance of subjective experience in the construction of the self and interaction with the environment.

The integration of these concepts can allow for a deeper understanding of leadership as a process of self-awareness and personal growth, where the exploration of internal potential and subjective experience are fundamental to innovation and adaptation in complex adaptive systems.

Integrating these concepts into a dynamic leadership approach can provide a deeper understanding of how leaders can create environments that facilitate growth and development in their followers. By recognizing the importance of transitional space and the subjective experiences of individuals, leaders can foster creativity and innovation while also promoting a sense of personal growth and fulfillment.

These concepts share some similarities and differences. Both concepts emphasize the importance of the relationship between individuals and objects in the construction of the self and the organization of experience.



However, while Winnicott's concept focuses on the capacity to find creative and imaginative ways of relating to the external world, Bollas's concept is concerned with the unconscious life of objects and how they can reveal aspects of the individual's inner world.

In this sense, the creative use of the object can be seen as a more active and conscious process, while the secret life of objects is more related to the unconscious and the symbolic dimension of objects.

Nonetheless, both concepts can provide valuable insights into the relationship between individuals and the material world in the context of leadership and organizational studies, highlighting the role of creativity, imagination, and symbolic representation in the construction of meaning and identity.

#### **4 Transitional-Transformative leadership development practical framework**

It is worth noting that these concepts are complementary and can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the role of objects in the leadership process. Both concepts emphasize the importance of the subjective experience and interpretation of objects, and how they can be used as tools for creativity, innovation, and transformation in complex adaptive systems.

Additionally, the integration of these concepts can help leaders to better understand the symbolic meanings and cultural significance of objects within their organization and use this understanding to enhance organizational culture and identity.

A practical approach to developing dynamic leadership that integrates the concepts of Winnicott and Bollas can involve several steps. First, leaders need to be encouraged to develop a deeper understanding of themselves and others through the exploration of their own subjective experiences and the interpersonal relationships that influence their behavior.

Second, leaders can be guided to create a safe and stimulating environment for creativity and innovation through the creative use of objects and the promotion of a culture of continuous learning.

Third, leaders can be trained in the skill of building and maintaining therapeutic relationships with their followers, creating a potential space for personal development and emotional growth.

Finally, leaders should be encouraged to work collaboratively and adaptively in complex adaptive systems, using their knowledge and subjective experiences to deal with uncertainty, ambiguity, and constant change.

As a result, the integration of these steps into a practical approach can help leaders develop the dynamic leadership necessary to meet the challenges of the current work environment and create an organizational culture that promotes creativity, innovation, and personal growth (Figure 1, Table 2).

**Figure 1:** Transitional-Transformative Leadership Development Spiral



Source: Elaborated by the author.

**Table 2:** Conceptual and Developmental Architecture of Transitional-Transformative Leadership

|                                                                       | <b>Self-experience and Subjectivity</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Creative Use of Objects</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Therapeutic Relationship</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               | <b>Collaborative and Adaptive Leadership</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Transitional-Transformative Leadership</b>                         | Leaders develop a deeper understanding of themselves and others by exploring their own subjective experiences and the interpersonal relationships that influence their behavior.                                                                                                                                                              | Leaders create a safe and stimulating environment for creativity and innovation by encouraging the creative use of objects and promoting a culture of continuous learning.                                                                                                                                                                           | Leaders build and maintain therapeutic relationships with followers, creating a potential space for personal development and emotional growth.                                                                                                                                                                                                | Leaders work collaboratively and adaptively in complex adaptive systems, using their knowledge and subjective experiences to navigate uncertainty, ambiguity, and constant change.                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>Transitional-Transformative Leadership Skills and Competencies</b> | <p>Leaders should demonstrate empathy towards their team members, listening actively and seeking to understand their perspectives and emotions.</p> <p>Leaders should possess self-awareness, recognizing their own emotions and biases and how they may affect their interactions with team members. Leaders should be skilled in active</p> | <p>Leaders should be skilled in effective communication, creating a culture of open and transparent communication among team members.</p> <p>Leaders should demonstrate trustworthiness, building trust with team members through honesty, transparency, and accountability.</p> <p>Leaders should be skilled in conflict resolution, addressing</p> | <p>Leaders should demonstrate empathy towards their team members, seeking to understand their experiences and perspectives.</p> <p>Leaders should be skilled in active listening, paying close attention to what team members are saying, and asking clarifying questions to ensure understanding.</p> <p>Leaders should be authentic and</p> | <p>Leaders should be skilled in collaboration, fostering teamwork and cooperation among team members.</p> <p>Leaders should possess adaptive problem-solving skills, be able to adapt to changing situations, and find creative solutions to complex problems.</p> <p>Leaders should demonstrate resilience, be able</p> |

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <p>listening, paying close attention to what team members are saying, and asking clarifying questions to ensure understanding.</p> <p>Leaders should approach team members with an open mind, without preconceived notions or judgments.</p> <p>Leaders should encourage creativity and innovative thinking, providing opportunities for team members to explore their ideas and express themselves.</p> <p>Reflection: Leaders should encourage self-reflection and reflection among team members, creating space for honest and open dialogue about emotions, thoughts, and experiences.</p> <p>Leaders should be flexible in their approach, adapting to the needs and preferences of their team members as they explore their subjective experiences.</p> <p>Leaders should possess cultural competence, recognizing and respecting the</p> | <p>conflicts among team members constructively and collaboratively.</p> <p>Leaders should provide positive reinforcement and recognition for team members' accomplishments and contributions, fostering a culture of appreciation and recognition.</p> <p>Leaders should possess emotional intelligence, recognizing and managing their own emotions and those of team members in a constructive and empathetic manner.</p> <p>Leaders should provide coaching and mentoring to team members, supporting their growth and development and fostering a culture of continuous learning.</p> <p>Leaders should promote inclusivity and diversity, creating a safe and welcoming environment for team members of all backgrounds and experiences.</p> <p>Leaders should encourage creativity and innovation, providing opportunities for team members to explore new ideas and approaches.</p> | <p>genuine, building therapeutic relationships based on trust, vulnerability, and openness.</p> <p>Leaders should demonstrate compassion and kindness towards team members, recognizing and validating their emotions and experiences.</p> <p>Leaders should be flexible in their approach, adapting to the needs and preferences of team members and building therapeutic relationships based on mutual respect and collaboration.</p> <p>Leaders should establish clear boundaries and expectations for relationships, maintaining a professional and ethical approach.</p> <p>Leaders should approach team members with a non-judgmental attitude, without preconceived notions or biases.</p> <p>Leaders should possess cultural competence, recognizing and respecting the diversity of perspectives and experiences among team members.</p> | <p>to cope with challenges and setbacks, and bounce back from adversity.</p> <p>Leaders should be flexible and adaptable, able to shift priorities and respond to changing circumstances in complex systems.</p> <p>Leaders should possess cultural competence, recognizing and respecting the diversity of perspectives and experiences among team members in complex systems.</p> <p>Leaders should be committed to active learning and continuous improvement, and willing to seek out new knowledge and skills to navigate complex systems.</p> <p>Leaders should possess emotional intelligence, able to recognize and manage their own emotions and those of team members in complex systems.</p> <p>Leaders should encourage innovation and creative thinking, providing opportunities for team members to explore new ideas and approaches.</p> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

|                                                                      |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                                                                      | diversity of perspectives and experiences among team members.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>Transitional-Transformative Leadership Development Background</b> | <p>Bollas' concept of "unthought-known" can encourage reflection and self-awareness in leadership. This may involve promoting practices such as meditation, mindfulness, and other self-development techniques to help leaders explore and understand their own subjective experiences.</p> <p>Winnicott's concepts of "true self" and "false self" can help leaders and team members explore their authentic selves and understand how they may be hiding behind a false self to fit in with others or meet external expectations.</p> | <p>Bollas' concept of "identity and subjectivity" can help leaders understand the unique perspectives and experiences of each team member and how they can support and encourage their creative expressions.</p> <p>Winnicott's concepts of "creative use of objects" and "potential space" can promote creativity and innovation within the team, allowing team members to use their imagination and innovation to explore solutions to complex problems.</p> | <p>Bollas' concept of a "therapeutic relationship" can create a safe and emotionally supportive work environment for the team. This can be achieved through effective communication practices, building trust, and emotional support for the team.</p> <p>Winnicott's concept of "emotional holding" can help leaders create a safe and supportive environment where team members feel comfortable expressing their emotions and seeking help when needed.</p> | <p>Bollas' concept of the "secret life of objects" can help leaders to better understand organizational culture and how practices, values, and beliefs affect team members. This can help leaders identify strengths and weaknesses in the organizational culture and work towards improving adaptation and change in complex adaptive systems.</p> <p>Winnicott's concept of the "transitional object" can help team members navigate complex systems by providing a sense of continuity and comfort in times of change and uncertainty.</p> |
| <b>Transitional-Transformative Leadership Development Tools</b>      | <p>Self-reflection exercises can help leaders explore their own emotions, beliefs, and values, which can then inform how they create a safe and welcoming environment for their team.</p> <p>Group discussions and sharing circles can create a safe and supportive environment for leaders and team</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | <p>Role-playing exercises can help leaders practice creating a safe and welcoming environment by addressing conflicts, building trust, and fostering open communication.</p> <p>Collaborative problem-solving activities can help leaders develop teamwork and collaboration skills while also fostering</p>                                                                                                                                                   | <p>Role-playing exercises can help leaders practice building therapeutic relationships by demonstrating empathy, active listening, and effective communication.</p> <p>Collaborative problem-solving activities can help leaders develop teamwork and collaboration skills while also</p>                                                                                                                                                                      | <p>Simulation exercises can help leaders practice collaboration and adaptive work in complex systems by providing a safe and controlled environment to explore different scenarios and responses.</p> <p>Case studies and problem-solving activities can help leaders develop critical thinking</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |

|  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|--|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  | <p>members to share their subjective experiences and perspectives. This can help build trust and understanding among team members and foster a positive workplace culture.</p> <p>Mindfulness practices can help leaders become more present and aware of their own emotions and those of others, which can inform how they create a safe and welcoming environment for their team.</p> <p>Role-playing exercises can help leaders practice empathetic listening and effective communication, which are important skills for creating a safe and welcoming environment.</p> <p>Creative activities such as journaling, artmaking, or improvisation exercises can help leaders explore and express their emotions in a safe and non-judgmental environment, which can inform how they create a safe and welcoming environment for their team.</p> | <p>a safe and stimulating environment.</p> <p>Mindfulness practices can help leaders create a safe and stimulating environment by fostering present-moment awareness, empathy, and openness.</p> <p>Empathy-building activities can help leaders develop a deeper understanding of their team members' experiences and perspectives, which can inform how they create a safe and stimulating environment.</p> <p>Feedback, feedforward, and reflection exercises can help leaders receive constructive feedback from their team members and reflect on their leadership practices, which can inform how they create a safe and stimulating environment.</p> | <p>fostering therapeutic relationships based on mutual respect and trust.</p> <p>Mindfulness practices can help leaders build therapeutic relationships by fostering present-moment awareness, empathy, and compassion for others.</p> <p>Empathy-building activities can help leaders develop a deeper understanding of their team members' experiences and perspectives, which can inform how they build therapeutic relationships.</p> <p>Self-reflection exercises can help leaders explore their own emotions and values, which can inform how they build therapeutic relationships based on authenticity and vulnerability.</p> | <p>and adaptive problem-solving skills in complex systems, while also fostering collaboration and teamwork.</p> <p>Cross-functional team projects can help leaders, and their teams develop adaptive work skills and collaboration in complex systems, while also promoting diversity and inclusivity.</p> <p>Experiential learning activities such as field trips, site visits, and role-playing exercises can help leaders, and their teams develop adaptive work skills and collaboration in complex systems by providing real-world experiences and challenges.</p> <p>Reflection and feedback exercises can help leaders, and their teams assess their performance in collaborative and adaptive work, identify strengths and areas for improvement, and foster a culture of continuous learning and improvement.</p> |
|  | Measuring employee satisfaction can indicate how well leaders are                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Measuring employee satisfaction can indicate how well leaders are creating                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Measuring trust can indicate how well leaders are building trust-based                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                | Problem-solving: Measuring problem-solving can indicate how well leaders and                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |





|                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Transitional-Transformative Leadership Assessment</b> | creating a safe and welcoming environment for team members to explore their subjective experiences.                                                                | a safe and stimulating environment for team members to thrive.                                                                                                | relationships with team members.                                                                                                                                          | team members can adapt and find creative solutions to complex problems.                                                                   |
|                                                          | Measuring employee engagement can indicate how well leaders are encouraging creativity, innovation, and open communication among team members.                     | Measuring employee engagement can indicate how well leaders are fostering teamwork, communication, and collaboration among team members.                      | Measuring communication can indicate how well leaders are fostering open, honest, and transparent communication with team members.                                        | Measuring teamwork can indicate how well leaders are fostering collaboration and cooperation among team members.                          |
|                                                          | Measuring employee retention can indicate how well leaders are building relationships with team members based on trust, authenticity, and openness.                | Measuring employee retention can indicate how well leaders are building relationships with team members based on trust, respect, and recognition.             | Measuring empathy can indicate how well leaders are understanding and responding to team members' emotional experiences.                                                  | Measuring communication can indicate how well leaders are promoting open and transparent communication among team members.                |
|                                                          | Measuring team productivity can indicate how well leaders are leveraging team members' creativity and innovation to drive business outcomes.                       | Measuring innovation can indicate how well leaders are encouraging and empowering team members to think creatively and find new solutions to problems.        | Measuring supportiveness can indicate how well leaders are providing emotional and professional support to team members.                                                  | Measuring resilience can indicate how well leaders and team members can cope with challenges and setbacks and bounce back from adversity. |
|                                                          | Measuring diversity and inclusivity can indicate how well leaders are recognizing and respecting the diversity of perspectives and experiences among team members. | Measuring learning and development can indicate how well leaders are providing opportunities for team members to grow and develop their skills and expertise. | Measuring vulnerability can indicate how well leaders are demonstrating vulnerability and openness, building therapeutic relationships based on mutual trust and respect. | Measuring adaptability can indicate how well leaders and team members can adapt to changing circumstances and respond to new challenges.  |
|                                                          | Measuring emotional intelligence can                                                                                                                               | Measuring inclusivity can indicate how well leaders are recognizing and respecting the diversity of perspectives and                                          | Measuring collaboration can indicate how well leaders are fostering teamwork, cooperation, and collaboration among team members.                                          | Measuring innovation can indicate how well leaders are fostering a culture of creativity and innovation among team members.               |
|                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                               | Measuring emotional                                                                                                                                                       | Performance: Measuring performance can indicate how well the team is achieving its goals                                                  |
|                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                           |
|                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                           |
|                                                          |                                                                                                                                                                    |                                                                                                                                                               |                                                                                                                                                                           |                                                                                                                                           |



|  |                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                               |                                |
|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
|  | indicate how well leaders are recognizing and managing their own emotions and those of team members, creating a positive and supportive workplace culture. | experiences among team members.<br>Measuring workplace culture can indicate how well leaders are creating a positive and productive environment where team members feel supported, empowered, and motivated. | intelligence can indicate how well leaders are recognizing and managing their own emotions and those of team members, creating a supportive and empathetic workplace culture. | and driving business outcomes. |
|--|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|

Source: Elaborated by the author.

According to Table 2, the integration of Winnicott and Bollas' concepts presents a promising approach to leadership development, emphasizing self-awareness, relationship building, and the creation of a safe and stimulating environment for creativity and innovation. These modules are meticulously crafted to reflect the depth and structured application of these theories.

The "self-experience and subjectivity" module encourages leaders to engage deeply with their own psychological insights and those of their colleagues. This introspection is vital for developing a nuanced understanding of personal and collective behaviors within organizations. It resonates with Bollas's concept of the 'unthought-known,' which highlights the importance of unrecognized knowledge within the psyche that can influence leadership decisions and actions. By recognizing these aspects, leaders can cultivate an environment where diverse perspectives are acknowledged and valued, thereby enhancing decision-making processes and adaptive capacity.

Moving on, the "creative use of objects" section prompts leaders to transcend the traditional utilitarian perspective of tools and resources. Inspired by Bollas's insights into the emotional and symbolic power of objects, this approach encourages leaders to utilize resources in ways that foster creativity and innovation within their teams. Such practices not only enrich the organizational culture but also equip the organization to meet new challenges with inventive solutions, thus enhancing its resilience and adaptability.

Next, the "Therapeutic Relationship" segment draws from the psychoanalytic tradition of creating spaces that promote psychological safety and growth. It underscores the leader's role in establishing trust-based, authentic relationships that support both personal and professional development of individuals. This element is critical in complex adaptive systems where continual change is the norm and psychological safety is key to enabling team members to adapt and thrive.



Lastly, the “Collaborative and Adaptive Leadership” unit highlights the importance of promoting collaboration and adaptability in environments characterized by complex dynamics and rapid changes. This segment of the framework urges leaders to embrace diversity, foster inclusive practices, and support team-based problem-solving efforts. These leadership practices are crucial for maintaining flexibility and responsiveness in the face of unpredictable environmental shifts.

In summary, Table 2 integrates these elements into a coherent framework that not only elucidates the theoretical foundations of our proposed leadership model but also serves as a practical guide for its implementation in real-world settings. By embracing these elements, leaders are equipped to foster environments that are innovative, supportive, and resilient, effectively navigating the complexities of contemporary organizational landscapes.

This integration ensures that the model is not merely conceptually robust but also pragmatically valuable, offering a comprehensive approach to leadership capable of driving transformative change and enhancing organizational performance in complex adaptive systems.

## 5 The framework in action: Practical implementation

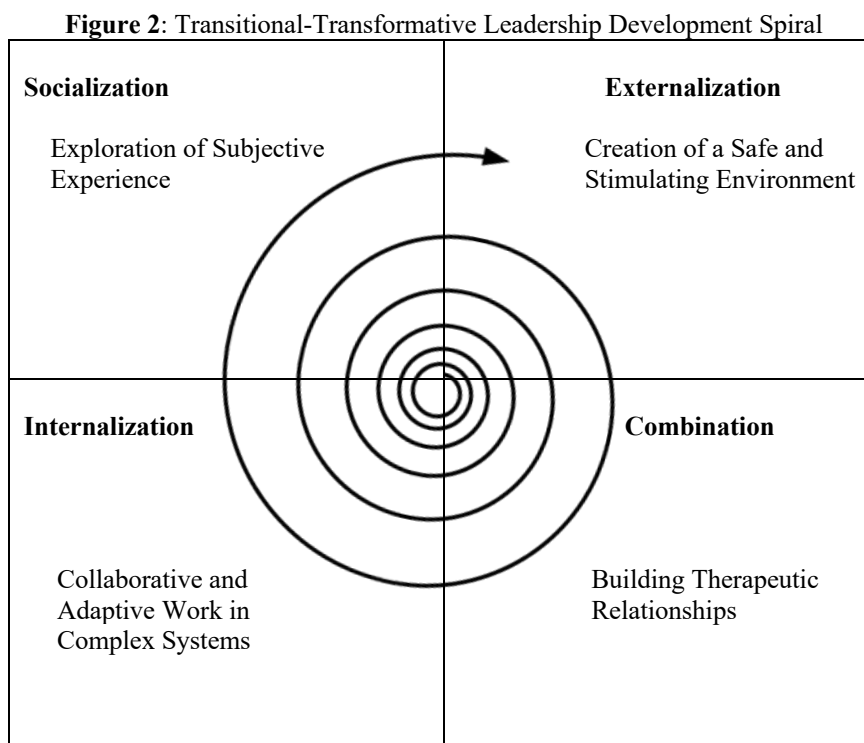
On a practical level, this transitional-transformative leadership development approach can be operationalized using Nonaka and Takeuchi’s spiral development methodology for creating and innovating “*Ba*” (Nonaka; Takeuchi, 1995).

Understood as a physical or virtual space, or a mental space where individuals come together to share experiences, knowledge, and ideas, and create something new, the authors describe four different types of *Ba*: i. Originating *Ba*: a space where individuals with diverse experiences and knowledge come together to share and create new knowledge; ii. Interacting *Ba*: a space where individuals interact with each other, building upon and sharing their knowledge and experiences; iii. Cyber *Ba*: a virtual space where individuals connect and collaborate through technology to create and share knowledge; iv. Exercising *Ba*: a space where individuals practice and refine their skills and knowledge through repetitive activities and exercises.

They also argue that creating and nurturing a *Ba* is essential for knowledge creation and innovation in organizations. By creating a shared space where individuals

can collaborate, share ideas, and create something new, organizations can foster a culture of innovation and continuous learning (Nonaka; Takeuchi, 1995).

Considering that, the authors offer a spiral development methodology for creating and innovating *Ba*, which consists of four stages: socialization, externalization, combination, and internalization (Figure 2).



**Source:** Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995 (Adapted by the author).

In the socialization stage, team members share their subjective experiences and explore each other's perspectives. In this stage, leaders can facilitate this stage by creating a safe and welcoming environment where team members feel comfortable sharing their thoughts and emotions.

In the externalization phase, team members externalize their ideas and thoughts into a shared concept or language that can be understood by others. At this moment, leaders can foster this stage by encouraging creativity, innovation, and open communication among team members.

In the third stage – combination –, team members combine their ideas and knowledge to create something new and innovative. In the combination phase, leaders can facilitate this stage by promoting teamwork, collaboration, and sharing of diverse perspectives.

In the final stage – internalization –, team members internalize the new concept or knowledge and apply it to their work. Leaders can support this stage by providing



opportunities for learning and development and fostering a culture of innovation and adaptation.

## 6 Conclusion

Integrating the psychoanalytical theories of Bollas (1987) and Winnicott (1971, 1965, 1953) into the conceptualization of leadership development within complex adaptive dynamic systems, one highlights the critical influence of early relational and environmental interactions on an individual's leadership potential, emphasizing the importance of emotional and relational experiences in fostering effective leadership.

While Winnicott's concepts emphasize the importance of a safe and supportive environment, creativity, and personal growth, Bollas' concepts highlight the role of unconscious processes, subjective experience, and interpersonal relationships in leadership development and organizational culture.

By integrating these concepts in the proposed framework, organizations can create a safe and stimulating environment for creativity and innovation, develop strong relationships with their followers, and gain a deeper understanding of their own subjective experiences and the culture of their organization.

As a result, this study bridges a significant gap in the literature by demonstrating how psychoanalytic theories can inform and enhance leadership practices in complex adaptive systems. By drawing on the profound insights of Bollas (1987) and Winnicott (1971, 1965, 1953) into the human psyche, it offers a new dimension to leadership that emphasizes the critical role of emotional and relational understanding in navigating the complexities of modern organizational life.

In addition, organizations are encouraged to emphasize the nurturing of emotional intelligence and relational competencies. These are essential for creating environments that foster individual and collective growth, innovation, and resilience, crucial for navigating the complexities of contemporary organizational landscapes. By doing so, they can cultivate a culture of leadership that promotes personal growth, creativity, and adaptability in the face of change and uncertainty.

Notwithstanding its potential contributions, the study is not without limitations. One such limitation is the theoretical generalization of the psychoanalytic concepts from Winnicott (1971, 1965, 1953) and Bollas (1987), which, while offering deep insights, may not be universally applicable across different cultural or organizational contexts.



Furthermore, the article predominantly relies on theoretical analysis and a literature review, lacking empirical data to substantiate the effectiveness of the proposed frameworks in actual organizational settings. This absence of empirical evidence highlights the need for future studies that could test these concepts across various environments to validate and refine the model effectively.

Another challenge is the complexity of implementing such a theoretical model in practical leadership scenarios. The transitional-transformative leadership model, though conceptually robust, requires leaders to possess a significant level of psychological expertise and training, which may not be feasible in all organizational contexts.

Moreover, there is an absence of discussion on how these leadership strategies might evolve over time within an organization. Longitudinal studies could shed light on the long-term impacts of these psychoanalytic approaches on leadership effectiveness and organizational change.

Addressing these gaps would not only strengthen the transitional-transformative leadership framework but also enhance its practical applicability in fostering effective leadership in complex and dynamically changing environments.

In this sense, future research endeavors should be directed towards its empirical testing across a variety of organizational contexts. This empirical validation will not only confirm its effectiveness but also assess its adaptability to different organizational cultures and structures.

Moreover, undertaking longitudinal studies could provide deeper insights into how these leadership approaches influence organizational outcomes over time, offering a clearer understanding of their long-term impacts.

Additionally, cross-cultural studies are essential to explore how cultural factors influence the applicability and success of these models. Such studies would broaden our understanding of their global relevance and adaptability, helping to tailor leadership strategies that are culturally sensitive and effective across diverse global settings. This comprehensive approach to future research will enhance the robustness of the transitional-transformative framework and expand its practical applications in nurturing effective leadership in complex adaptive systems.

In any case, the study suggests that integrating the concepts of Winnicott (1971, 1965, 1953) and Bollas (1987) offers a promising approach to leadership development that emphasizes self-awareness, relationship building, and the promotion of a safe and stimulating environment for creativity and innovation. By embracing these concepts and



applying them in practice, leaders can become more effective and adaptable in their roles and contribute to the development of healthy, thriving organizations.

## References

ARMSTRONG, D. **Organization in the mind**: psychoanalysis, group relations, and organizational consultancy: occasional papers 1989-2003. 1st ed. London: Karnac Books, 2005. 167 p.

BOLLAS, C. The transformational object. **The International Journal of Psycho-Analysis**, v. 60, n. 1, p. 97-107, 1979. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351262880-9>.

BOLLAS, C. **The shadow of the object**: Psychoanalysis of the unthought known. 1st ed. New York: Columbia University Press, 1987. 295 p.

EOYANG, G. H.; HOLLADAY, R. J. **Adaptive action**: Leveraging uncertainty in your organization. 1st ed. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013. 264 p.

HOLLAND, J. H. **Hidden order**: How adaptation builds complexity. 1st ed. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1995. 185 p.

KETS DE VRIES, M. F. R.; FLORENT-TREACY, E.; KOROTOV, K. Psychodynamic issues in organizational leadership. In: LEONARD, H. S.; LEWIS, R.; FREEDMAN, A. M.; PASSMORE, J. (ed.). **The Wiley-Blackwell handbook of the psychology of leadership, change, and organizational development**. 1st ed. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2013. p. 65-88.

LEVIN, S. A. **Fragile dominion**: Complexity and the commons. 1st ed. New York: Basic Books, 1999. 272 p.

NONAKA, I.; TAKEUCHI, H. **The knowledge-creating company**: How Japanese companies create the dynamics of innovation. 1st ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. 304 p.

SNOWDEN, D. J.; BOONE, M. E. A leader's framework for decision making. **Harvard Business Review**, Boston, v. 85, n. 11, p. 68-76, 2007. Disponível em: <https://hbr.org/2007/11/a-leaders-framework-for-decision-making>.

STACEY, R. D. **Strategic management and organizational dynamics**: The challenge of complexity. 6th ed. Harlow: Pearson Education, 2010. 560 p.

UHL-BIEN, M. Relational leadership theory: Exploring the social processes of leadership and organizing. **The Leadership Quarterly**, Amsterdam, v. 17, n. 6, p. 654-676, 2006. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2006.10.007>.

UHL-BIEN, M. Complexity and COVID-19: Leadership and followership in a complex world. **Journal of Management Studies**. v. 58, n. 5, p. 1400-1404, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joms.12696>.

UHL-BIEN, M.; ARENA, M. Complexity leadership: Enabling people and organizations for adaptability. **Organizational Dynamics**, Amsterdam, v. 46, n. 1, p. 9-20, 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2016.12.001>.



UHL-BIEN, M.; ARENA, M. Leadership for organizational adaptability: a theoretical synthesis and integrative framework. **The Leadership Quarterly**, v. 29, n. 1, p. 89-104, 2018.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2017.12.009>.

UHL-BIEN, M.; MARION, R.; McKELVEY, B. Complexity leadership theory: Shifting leadership from the industrial age to the knowledge era. **The Leadership Quarterly**, Amsterdam, v. 18, n. 4, p. 298-318, 2007. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2007.04.002>.

WALDROP, M. M. **Complexity**: The emerging science at the edge of order and chaos. 1st ed. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992. 380 p.

WALLERSTEIN, R. S. The relevance of Freud's psychoanalysis in the 21st century: its science and its research. **Psychoanalytic Psychology**, v. 23, n. 2, p. 302-326, 2006. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0736-9735.23.2.302>.

WHEATLEY, M. J. **Leadership and the new science**: Learning about organization from an orderly universe. 1st ed. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 1999. 248 p.

WINNICOTT, D. W. Transitional objects and transitional phenomena. **International Journal of Psycho-Analysis**, London, v. 34, n. 2, p. 89-97, 1953. Disponível em: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/13061115/>.

WINNICOTT, D. W. **Collected papers**: Through pediatrics to psycho-analysis. 1st ed. London: Tavistock Publications, 1958. 350 p.

WINNICOTT, D. W. The theory of the parent-infant relationship. **International Journal of Psycho-Analysis**, v. 41, n. 6, p. 585-595, 1960. Disponível em: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/13785877/>.

WINNICOTT, D. W. **The maturational processes and the facilitating environment**: Studies in the theory of emotional development. 1st ed. New York: International Universities Press, 1965. 285 p.

WINNICOTT, D. W. **Playing and reality**. 1st ed. London: Tavistock Publications, 1971. 169 p.

**Recebido em:** 28 de junho de 2023.

**Aceito em:** 24 de maio de 2025.