Intellectual Shamans, Wayfinder Scholars and Edgewalkers

Working for System Change

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This introductory paper frames the special issue by exploring the potential of academics and others to serve as Intellectual Shamans, Wayfinders and Edgewalkers to inspire system change. We draw upon the shamanic and Māori Wayfinding traditions as they apply to intellectuals in the management academy and the concept of Edgewalking to explore the ways in which academics can create the change that is needed to effect a thriving and ecologically harmonized world for humankind and the rest of the world's living beings. We explore various dimensions of what constitutes awakening and reflective practices and argue that the role of hope allows aspirations of a better world to emerge, grow and take hold.

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There is a story of two disciples who wished to test the Zen master to see if he really knew all that people said he was supposed to know. Their plan was the following: They caught a small bird that fitted in the palm of their hand. They decided that they would keep the bird in the closed palm of their hand and ask the master if the bird was dead or alive. If the master said it was alive, they would crush the bird in their hand and then open their hand to show it was dead. If the master said it was dead, they would open their palm and let the bird fly away. With this strategy in mind, they went to visit the master while he was giving a public discourse. They raised their hands and said they had a question. "Go ahead" said the master. Then they posed their question: "Master, master, with your great knowledge, please can you tell us if the bird in our hand is dead or alive?" The master looked at them, smiled, and said, "Hope is in your hands" (adaptation of Zen Buddhist Story).

Hope is, at least partly, in our hands as scholars, too. Academic and intellectual work, particularly within management disciplines, we believe, needs to help effect managerial, organizational and societal change in a direction that allows for a transition to what has been called a sustainable enterprise economy. A sustainable enterprise economic system is one where humans can live in harmony with nature rather than, as the current system evidences, exploiting and overusing nature’s resources for human benefit (e.g. Waddock & McIntosh, 2011; McIntosh, 2013). As management scholars working in what is inherently an applied set of disciplines, we will argue that our work needs to deal with the very real challenges for a planet faced with human-induced climate change, sustainability crises and a sixth wave of species extinctions linked to human activities, growing global inequality, and a host of other issues created by the current business-as-usual socio-economic model (e.g. Ehrenfeld & Hoffman, 2013; Jackson, 2011; Schor, 2010, Stead & Stead, 2014).

Hope for us as scholars and thought leaders implies that our research “inspire[s] and enable[s] a better world”, as the world’s largest professional management scholarly association, the Academy of Management, says in its vision.

There are plenty of critiques of today’s management research, e.g. that it lacks relevance to real-world problems (e.g. Bansal et al., 2012), or fails to develop relevant implications for practice (Bartunek & Rynes, 2010). That it is creating “bad theories” that mislead decision makers in important ways (e.g. Ghoshal, 2005; Pfeffer, 2005) and that it needs to be transdisciplinary to be relevant and deal with complex issues (McIntosh, 2013). Too often management research seems more focused on improving academic rankings, citation counts, or journal impact factors (e.g. Adler & Harzing, 2009; Mingers & Willmott, 2011, 2013) than actual real-world impact (e.g. Aguinis et al., 2012). This situation has generated numerous calls for more innovative or imaginative research (e.g. Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013; Alvesson & Gabriel, 2013), more “engaged scholarship” (Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006), greater research relevance (e.g. Bennis, 2010; Lorsch, 2009), and “actionability” (e.g. Pearce & Huang, 2012; Martin, 2012), among many other critiques. Though some claim that the gap between rigorous research and relevance is unbridgeable (Kieser & Leiner, 2009) or that it is unnecessarily divisive and harmful to good research (Gulati, 2007), others suggest that some scholars are already successfully bridging that gap (Hodgkinson & Rousseau, 2009).
scholars, acting as what we call Intellectual Shamans, Wayfinder scholars and/or Edgewalkers, can begin to think differently about their research.

In developing these ideas, we want to offer hope for a different approach to management scholarship from that embedded in the current critiques. In the face of the desert of hope associated with focusing on impact factors of various sorts rather than content and actual contribution, there are scholars already working to make their contributions meaningful and healing of the world or theories and practices with which they engage. These scholars are richly engaged with ideas, experience and observations that puzzle and provoke new insights and ideas.

This context of modern organizations and societies, we argue, calls for rethinking our approach to scholarship and research in fundamental ways. Specifically, we will argue for a reincorporation of some traditional, more holistic and experientially based ways of knowing and understanding, which are illustrated using three sets of traditions, the healing, connecting and sense-making capacities of the (intellectual) shaman (Waddock, 2015a; Frost & Egri, 1994; Egri & Frost, 1991), the Wayfinding traditions of the Māori (e.g. Spiller, 2012) and the bridging and spiritual qualities and skills of the Edgewalker (Neal, 2006). Shamans, Wayfinders and Edgewalkers use intuition and other less than “objective” means, including aspiration and hope—in the shaman traditions “dreaming the [desired] world into existence”, the Wayfinders’ “letting the island come to you”, or the Edgewalker “walking between worlds”—to gain insights and make sense of our fractured world more holistically than do many researchers intent on atomization and fragmentation of knowledge. We believe that many more academics could and perhaps should take on roles such as Shaman, Wayfinder and Edgewalker in their efforts to understand the managerial, leadership, organizational and societal issues to help bring about through their ideas a more sustainable world. In essence, our goal with this paper is to issue a call to academics to become Intellectual Shamans, Wayfinder scholars, Edgewalkers, or follow other similarly more holistic paths, albeit set in the modern context (Waddock, 2015a; Spiller, 2012; Neal, 2008). The path we outline takes courage, vision and persistence—and goes against the grain of much of today’s management academy as the critiques noted above suggest. We set these traditions in the context of the need for hope and consequent new ideas and actions to transform our world. Such traditions encourage us to see beyond a fragmentary logic to “where the real engagement lies” (Sen, 2006, p. 136) and impel us to “imagine other worlds and other lives in the interstices beyond the binary oppositions in which we entrap ourselves” (Heredia, 2007, p. 355).

**Why hope matters**

Adler (2006, p. 497) defines the art of leadership as “hope made real”, arguing that it involves inspiration and “the courage to bring reality to possibility” (p. 496), so that people are able and willing to make needed changes. It is exactly
in this sense that we also apply the term to the leadership potential embedded in scholarly work. Hope lies in the effort—the willingness—to do work that potentially changes the world for the better; hope is focused outward, toward the future and toward community rather than inward toward citations, impact factors and journal rankings. In 1964, Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech galvanized the United States. More recently Barack Obama’s “Audacity of Hope” presented the American people and the world with possibilities and the hope of “blessed unrest” (Hawken, 2007), as Hawken termed the (largely unconnected) 1 to 2 million small socially activist enterprises working in one way or another for social justice and sustainability. To the extent that ideas matter, they shape our beliefs about the world around us, much as Adler argues that artists help to shape understanding of the emerging future (also, Rueschemeyer, 2006).

Ideas are the instigators of new memes, the cultural artefacts that shape our beliefs and worldviews (Dawkins, 2006; Blackmore, 2000). Shifting memes or ideas that shape beliefs is fundamental to effecting change at any level (Waddock, 2015b). Scholars can, if they choose, be powerful generators of new memes that can help shape a better future by refocusing human thought and energy towards a more sustainable path (e.g. the ideas of sustainability and stakeholders both represented new memes when introduced). This approach to scholarly work happens when scholars begin thinking more holistically, when they work from experienced issues, problems and observations (rather than literature “gaps”) and when they are willing to take the risk to tackle something new. Hope, which is a facet of positive organizational scholarship (Cameron & Spreitzer, 2013; Snyder et al., 2005), though elusive, helps us make our dreams come true (Pio, 2014), relating to ideas like flourishing (Ehrenfeld & Hoffman, 2013), excellence, optimal functioning and altruism (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008; Chen & Miller, 2011; Gebauer, 2013).

Hope consists of pathways and agency where multiple possibilities are envisioned and there is agency to undertake these pathways. The crux of hope is a commitment to social justice, the ability to struggle for a better world, a spiritual outlook; it is a means to “authentically face the realities of injustice without resentment” (Sandage & Morgan, 2014, p. 559). Hope in scholarship, we believe, requires us to be willing to challenge ourselves in ways epitomized in many Indigenous traditions and mostly lost in modern ones. How we humans handle the challenges of today will determine the future of our fragile planet and our humanity, and that includes us as scholars and the ideas and memes we promulgate (Adler, 2014) for good or for ill.

High hopes that are realistic are associated with organizational and, arguably, societal cultures that are flexible, resilient and confident, where environmental threats are converted into economic, caring and compassionate opportunities (Luthans & Jensen, 2002). Hope is associated with the enablement and accomplishment of challenging goals and employee work engagement behaviour (Ugwui & Amazue, 2014) and is also an indicator of eustress and new possibilities in individuals (Nel & Bosshoff, 2014). Individuals who are prepared to stand up and speak out for what they believe in, such as in ethical dilemmas, are likely
to possess aspects of hope, bravery, integrity, self-awareness, self-regulation and optimism (Harrington & Rayner, 2010; Mroz & Quinn, 2010).

Hope functions as a facilitator of change, transformation and recovery (i.e. resilience) in difficult situations (Kelly, Hoopes & Connor, 2003). In performing inspiring actions that engender hope, there is movement from an abstract concept to one that is both pragmatic and realistic (Saelor et al., 2014). It is in such a process that individuals are “in-the-world” and where reflection is from within rather than upon the world (Zundel, 2013). Citing Heidegger, Zundel (2013) writes about the three vectors of care that inform reflection—understanding, attunement and discourse—which involves experiencing the world rather than only theoretically contemplating it. In other words, the worldly immersion and finitude of being with people and objects underscores reflection as an unfolding process (Zundel, 2013) that enables new connections to be made and ideas to be generated. Ingold’s metaphor of “walking around” indicates how deeply we are immersed within the world with its networks of connections, meaning making and significances (discussed in Zundel, 2013). Such immersion opens us to the possibility of dialogic encounters and alternative perspectives and suggests a more engaged way of dealing with scholarship (e.g. Van de Ven & Johnson, 2006).

While they may not actually experience hopelessness, many academics seem to exhibit a fundamental disconnect from the troubles of the world, which leads to the critiques discussed earlier (e.g. Adler, 2010; Aguinis et al., 2012; Ireland, 2012; Pearce & Huang, 2012). Sutton (2015) writes of critical hope, which combines rationality and passion, determinism and freedom in a dialectical synthesis in the realm of pedagogic praxis. Such praxis involves critical reflection on current practice which can serve as a catalyst for change at both the individual and the societal level for the development of more transformative and progressive pedagogies. Sutton encourages higher education practitioners to discover for themselves “the small spaces of praxis wherein the possibility of more creative learning and teaching reside; the small spaces in which human knowing, being and doing are transformed” (p. 45). Linked to critical hope is Jonathan Lear’s (2006) notion of radical hope, where creative and moral imagination along with compassion, empathy and understanding, can be the foundation for a commitment to goodness, despite being in the midst of devastation. We believe that incorporation of some traditional ways may be a way to re-engage hope in academic work, as we explain below using Shamanism, Wayfinding and Edgewalking as examples.

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**Intellectual Shamans, Wayfinder scholars and Edgewalkers: a new/old consciousness for generating hope**

There is a story of an old woman who wanted to go to a sacred mountain, but on her way there was a great storm. The woman stopped at a small inn and knocked on the door to request the inn keeper for permission to stay the night. The man on
looking at her frail state said, “Sure, but it will be impossible for you to reach the mountain”. The old woman quietly smiled and said, “My heart got there first, so the rest of me will follow”. Such is the tremendous power of hope (adaptation of traditional Buddhist story).

The reasons for the situation described in the previous section are complex and go deeply into the history of the so-called mind-body split, which has also resulted in the atomization and fragmentation of knowledge. Ryle (1949) and later Arthur Koestler in a book entitled *The Ghost in the Machine* (1967) argued that the Cartesian split, which separates mind and body, was misguided at best and ultimately destructive for humanity. This split exemplifies what Harris & Freeman (2008) called the separation thesis, separating ethics from action, and generally failing to view things holistically, as if inseparables could in fact be separated, a split that systems scholar C. West Churchman argued against all of his career (see Mason & Mitroff, 2015).

As Miller (2005, p. 153) points out, “...that in which we dwell shapes how we experience the world and interpret the data that we take in”. In this situation, it is easy to lose sight of the fact that our uncritical participation in the current system of impact factors and citations helps co-create our reality as well as our belief that the system cannot change. In contrast to this rather hopeless scenario, we think that academics can operate from a place of hope, serving as Intellectual Shamans, Wayfinder scholars and Edgewalkers, drawing on more holistic, experience-based insights geared toward a better world, to do work oriented toward making the world a better place, working across disciplines, and venturing into territories where uncertainty abides. As noted above, we illustrate the ways in which these academics work using three sets of traditions, Shamanism, Wayfinding and Edgewalking, though there are other traditions that might equally well serve.

**Intellectual Shamans**

The traditional shaman⁴ is the healer and often the sage—medicine woman or man, the wise person—found in virtually all Indigenous cultures (Eliaide, 1972; Krippner, 2004). Shamans, who are typically central figures within their communities, serve not only as healers, but also as connectors,² and sensemakers (Frost & Egri, 1994; Egri & Frost, 1991; Waddock, 2015), doing important work of healing individuals and also of healing the cultural mythologies (Dow, 1986) that constitute the fundamental memes or belief systems of their communities.

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¹ The word shaman has its roots in Manchu-Tungus (a sub-family of the Altaic language family) šamán, an ancient term from the lands of the Tungus, the area around Lake Baikal in southern Siberia, the original home of Indigenous peoples such as the Evenki. The Sanskrit word śramana (referring to a monk; ascetic) and the Chinese term scha-men (meaning to know; monk) bear the imprint of Tungus origins (Eliaide, 1972).

² Two seminal papers by Peter Frost and Carolyn Egri (1991, 1994) in the management literature on organizational development practitioners as shamans, call this function “mediator of reality” or “boundary-spanner”.


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Shamans are not only healers but also perhaps were the world’s first artists, psychotherapists, timekeepers, weather forecasters, magicians and storytellers, among other functions (Krippner, 2004). Our premise is that shamans are equally present though often unacknowledged in modern cultures, where in academia they serve as Intellectual Shamans, working to heal theories, disciplines, research and practice through their work. We focus below on the work of Intellectual Shamans, as scholars within the management academy, though as with traditional shamans they can be found in virtually all occupations and cultures.

Intellectual Shamans are academics doing intellectual work (writing, teaching, theorizing and research of various kinds) that integrates disciplines holistically, through the three main roles of the shaman: healing, connecting and sensemaking in the service of a better world (Waddock, 2015a; also Frost & Egri, 1994; Egri & Frost, 1991). They tend to work by integrating across multiple disciplines and care about the impacts of ideas in ways that go beyond citation counts, basing their ideas and insights on real world observations, experiences and inquiries rather than purported “theoretical gaps” in the literature. In doing so they generate hope for a better world in general—as well as potentially for academics struggling with today’s narrowing demands—because they are doing work to make practice, their disciplines, the integration of disciplines, research, or the world better. In this way they act as thought leaders and public intellectuals.

Intellectual Shamans tend to be people to whom we are drawn for the power of their ideas, because of their endless curiosity and because they seem to shine with an internal light, as James Walsh, former president of the Academy of Management, has said (see Waddock, 2015a). There are many such individuals even within the fraught academic system described earlier, doing work that is important, that benefits others, ideas, or practice and who reach beyond narrow research confines to attempt to influence (or be influenced by) practice.

Such academics take the intellectual risks needed to find and follow their own core purposes and insights, about which they have some passion—typically, an intellectual pursuit involving research, writing, teaching and practice (or some combination). To accomplish these ends, they have had to “become fully who they are”, that is, to follow that sense of purpose toward doing work that is meaningful and healing of the world (Waddock, 2015a), and in that sense, they are hopeful as we have defined it above. Intellectual (and other) Shamans strive for what Frost & Egri (1994) call holistic balance, accessing multiple realms to gain information, knowing all the while that change—or healing the relevant cultural mythology—is an ongoing process of which they are only a part. As noted, three main roles characterize their work: healing, connecting and sensemaking (Waddock, 2015a; Frost & Egri, 1994; Egri & Frost, 1991), described in more detail below.

**Healing**

The healing goal of the shaman is to heal a disordered or diseased cultural mythology surrounding the patient, because traditional shamans believe that
when people get sick it is because there is something wrong with the cultural
mythology (see Dow, 1986) or the set of memes that influence the worldview of
the community. The hope for Intellectual Shamans, sometimes unarticulated,
is to heal theory, ideas, practices, teaching, or research by, effectively, “seeing” a
new way to frame the situation or a new way forward, which can mean telling a
new story (creating a new meme) that helps mend an old, broken story or nar-
rative. At their core, as King articulates, the shaman is a “healer of relationships:
between mind and body, between people, between circumstances and people,
between humans and Nature, and between matter and spirit” (King, 2009, p. 14).
Etymologically, there is a link between the word healing (healer) and the
words whole, health and holy. All derive from the Old English word *hol*, according
to the *Online Etymology Dictionary*. The link to the (broadly defined) sacred,
by which we mean the search for meaning in life, is inherent in the healing that
intellectual (and other) shamans do, even when it is not explicitly acknowledged
or even recognized. The future-orientation towards evolution, needed systemic
change and necessary adaptation and learning (McIntosh, 2015; Neal 2006) is
also implied because healing is a process that starts from the now and moves
forward toward a hoped-for future when things will be more whole.

Connecting

Traditional shamans are seers, crossing the boundaries between (“normal” and
spiritual) realms, often in a state of trance, to access and bring back information
that can be used to heal what the shaman perceives as a broken cultural mythol-
ogy (Dow, 1986). The Intellectual Shaman understands that multiple realms of
experience and knowledge are relevant to seeing holistically (and to avoid the
fragmentation of knowledge). Intellectual Shamans work by crossing discipli-
nary, theory-practice, teaching-research, entrepreneurial and other boundaries,
to gain insights and create novel ways of looking systemically at situations and,
indeed, memes that consequently lend hope for a better world in the process.

Myths are the ways in which traditional cultures preserved knowledge, as
the great mythologist Joseph Campbell pointed out (1988). Just as many of
today’s theories and ideas about organization and management are reified, so
traditional cultures tell their truths through their myths and narratives about
the world (Laughlin & Throop, 2001). When those myths are misaligned with
reality, trouble ensues—both in the world of ideas and reality where Intellec-
tual Shamans live and in traditional cultures. In gathering information from
different realms, Intellectual Shamans have to trust their scholarly instincts
and gain insights that are not necessarily always “known” in traditional ways
because new connections are being made—and broken myths are likely to be
shattered in the process.
Sensemaking

The sensemaking role is one of guidance, even spiritual leadership (Eliade, 1972; also, Egri & Frost, 1991), making sense out of what otherwise is not seen by others or is confusing or fragmented. The idea (meme) of sensemaking, originated with Karl Weick (see for example Weick, Sutcliffe & Obstfeld, 2005) but the process of sensemaking has always been a part of what Frost & Egri (1994, 1994) called the spiritual leadership of the shaman. A central role of the shaman is to make sense of the world for others—and for Intellectual Shamans that can involve generating new memes that help shape new understandings and new ways of viewing the world.

Sensemaking integrally involves seeing—seeing reality as much as possible as it is, often through multiple lenses—and into a new future. Intellectual Shamans work not only from theories and abstractions but from direct experience, often direct engagement, with the issues and ideas that form the basis of their writing. For Intellectual Shamans, sensemaking can mean taking the risk to speak their own truth—reality as they see it from the often multi- or cross-disciplinary, boundary-spanning perspectives they have gained. They tend to use their intuition—and internal sense o[f] purpose and direction—for guidance about what is important and meaningful—and take the necessary risks to do work in the domains that attract them. Taking this path means maintaining what we call open awareness and reflection so that the work is constantly pulling us towards the new, the intriguing and the potentially important.

Intellectual Shamans, through seeing and making connections across boundaries in their connector role, are able to tell a new story about (make sense of) what is happening in the world—in ways that the relevant audiences can understand, serving in many ways as the wise elder (cf. Egri & Frost, 1991). Intellectual Shamans thus take the understandings gained by crossing disciplinary or other boundaries, and making connections, to help others make sense of what they have learned. The shaman has a certain power that he or she uses to help heal the world—and bring about hope for a better future, doing so in ways that Scharmer (2009) calls “letting come” rather than forcing change.

Power

Traditional shamans have a great deal of power that derives from their spiritual leadership and healing roles, because they gain their knowledge by accessing spiritual realms. For the shaman, the ethical task is to use that power wisely and in healing ways; however, it is true that there is a potential dark side to this power. Traditional shamans interact with “guides” in spiritual realms to try to heal the souls of their clients. When the power is not used in a healing way, the shaman becomes a sorcerer rather than a shaman. The healing orientation of the shaman is central to the definition we are using but we need to recognize that with power comes responsibility that needs to be used wisely, whether by the traditional or the Intellectual Shaman in today’s world. Hence although we call for many more academics to tap into the potential power of the shaman, we
also recognize that this power needs to be used wisely and well. We move now to the second type of knowledge we believe potentially useful to the management academic, that of the Wayfinder.

Wayfinder scholars

The universe is full of magical things patiently waiting for our wits to grow sharper (E. Phillpotts, 1919, p. 17).

The Inuit who read the snowscape, Australian aboriginal people who track the desert, Bedouin nomads who traverse the sand dunes and Polynesian voyagers who navigate the oceans are some of the Wayfinders who continue to practise their ancient craft in cultural pockets around the world. Through careful reading of the signs in their environment, Wayfinders maintain mental maps, without using modern instruments, maps that are continually updated in terms of time, distance and bearing so that they always remain aware of their destination and home base. They are phenomenal explorers who synthesize information, from the hint of a paw print to the sweep of the starlit night sky, and undertake remarkable journeys of discovery to new territories. They draw upon many types of intelligence to make their decisions. Today's Wayfinders are the living face of a way of being that has been orally transmitted from one generation to the next through millennia. We believe that just as they can tap into the three major functions and skills of the Intellectual Shaman, so management academics can potentially benefit from tapping into the skills of the Wayfinder.

The focal wayfinding philosophy in this paper is that of Polynesian navigators. Oceanic navigators traversed the vast spaces of the oceans at a time when many people still thought the world was flat. These intrepid and dauntless explorers developed extraordinary skills in the art of wayfinding across huge distances. Central to their craft is the discipline of reading the signs, such as swell patterns, cloud lore, phosphorescence and homing birds, which provide valuable information for the master navigators to make landfall. Just as when academics leave the realm of known theories, ideas and memes, when the navigators leave the world of the known (visible islands, travelled waters), starpaths, swells and winds become crucial guides, so intuition, curiosity, observation and fearless

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3 Traditional navigators are especially chosen, some from birth, to enter the whare wānanga, house of learning for waka navigators. Not everyone can enter the wānanga or become a navigator; a person has to be chosen or have the necessary whakapapa (genealogy). Special thanks to Rereata Makiha, the elder-in-residence at the University of Auckland Business School for these thoughts (personal communication, 2017). As noted in Spiller, Barclay-Kerr and Panoho (2015): "A master wayfinder, of whom there are very few, has reached a level of maturity and depth of wisdom to handle all forms of knowledge. On board the waka there is knowledge of navigation, of which quite a lot can be shared with others. This is general, common knowledge [and is the knowledge that broadly informs this paper]. Some knowledge, however, is deemed extremely powerful and must be treated as sacrosanct and restricted so it is not misused [and is avoided in this discussion of wayfinding]."
"seeing" of reality become guides for academics. Wayfinder scholars potentially serve as models for academics who wish to pursue the healing path of Intellectual Shamanism, moving toward a hope that cannot be known in advance of doing something. In contrast to the hyper-rational "square intelligence" (cf. Miller, 2005; Spiller, Kerr & Panoho, 2015) that boxes in so many of today's academics, Wayfinders' healing, connecting and sense-making capacities are based on deep knowledge and intuition, using "sphere intelligence".

Square intelligence

Many scholars working in academic institutions today are straitjacketed into narrow corridors that are defined by an over-reliance on rationalism and deductive logic, which we call square intelligence. They succumb to the relentless pressure to publish in A-tier journals that valorize a formulaic and unimaginative approach to research (Alvesson & Gabriel, 2013; Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013). Academia rewards intellectual endeavour that may have little bearing upon the world outside the academic conversation, or has negligible contribution to make to the well-being of communities. For many, research is more like an extractive industry to build status than a service to humanity. Miller (2005) urges us to consider the purpose of our work:

Those of us who have come to view our research as merely instrumental to our career objectives need to get back in touch with our concern and convictions about organizations and their roles in our lives... If we care about the role of organizations in peoples' lives, objectivity is neither feasible nor normative for our research (Miller, 2005, pp. 169-170).

Institutional maps of what comprises scholarly success can mean we become so acculturated to fixing our sights on institutional goals that we are more focused on the goal than the reality. We may be on target with our publishing strategies, pleasing our annual performance reviewers, managing our promotional trajectories and fulfilling our professorial duties, but what kind of reality are we actually helping to create in the world? Are we becoming that which we truly believe in or are we becoming that which we abhor? Is our life purpose weaving a thread of meaning? Is our research creating change? Are we giddy from a lack of air in our rarefied academic atmospheres or giddy from the joy of making a difference in the community...or from both? Are we off course from what is really important?

Sphere intelligence

The ancient art of wayfinding involves the ability to obtain facts from reality itself and learn in a poly-dimensional mode of dynamic dwelling. Wayfinding calls this art "sphere intelligence", which refers to the ability to see the whole as well as the details, to look at a situation from different perspectives. While Wayfinders draw upon "square intelligence" (Spiller et al., 2015), they are not limited or subject to this form of knowing as their final recourse of decision-making and
path-finding. Embodied knowing, sensory perception and multiple dimensions of intelligence, such as relational, emotional, ancestral, creative and spiritual are all viable and valuable sources of knowing.

Cultivating sphere intelligence rests upon a “philosophy of recognition” (Spiller et al., 2015). Wayfinders must discriminate the information received through recognition of many elements to build a multi-perspective understanding of situations. They recognize the intrinsic worth of others and accept the task of spotting signs of potential and harnessing this potential for the purposes of the group. They recognize that they might not know. They are able to refresh their cognitive models by challenging their own thinking in order to have sharp mental clarity and discernment. They recognize their own limitations and habitual responses that might get in the way of seeing clearly. They understand that non-recognition of what is important in their environments is harmful and even dangerous; it can mean not seeing important information about a situation. A philosophy of recognition is underpinned by values such as reciprocity, humility, response-ability (to respond, not react) and respect for all living creatures that helps Wayfinders gain clarity about their surrounds.

**Calling the island to us**

For the purposes of navigation the Wayfinder considers the waka, the ocean-going sailing vessel, to be stationary. The task is to stay alert in a state of relaxed vigilance and attune to the signs around them—the clouds, stars, swells, winds and so forth—rather like sitting on a train where it seems the rider is still and the world is flying past. By moving from a place of stillness, in a mode of active presence and aligning to the signs, the island comes to the navigator. Theirs is a world of “be-coming” and unfolding in contrast to the linear goal-conquering mode that exists in many organizational and academic modalities today (Lewis, 1972; Spiller, 2012).

When we as scholars adopt a mode of be-coming and recognition, of being responsive, not merely reactive, we are more attuned to nuance and comfortable with ambiguity, we trust our intuition and cultivate sphere intelligence. Wayfinding works with recognizing and responding to what is happening as it unfolds. Its power lies in synthesizing many dimensions of intelligence—not just rational, abstract knowledge. The whole body becomes an instrument of perception so we see things that others may not. The senses become highly trained to discern very subtle shifts and differences. We peer deeper into the folds of reality in the same way as we now know that neutrons pass through our bodies every second.

Cajete (2000) encourages participation in a direct relationship with the environment and by having “a life-centered, lived experience of the natural world” (p. 5) to become more open to perceiving multiple possibilities. This open awareness can result in ike pāpūia, or “second sight”, which, like “seeing” for the shaman, brings forth a different dimension of knowledge (Meyer, 1998). Goethe discussed the deeper state of knowing that can be achieved by attuning the senses, developing powers of perception and trusting the intuitive...
consciousness. By dwelling deep within phenomena, we can potentially perceive inner connections, giving much more meaning to the original Greek meaning of the word *theoria*, or “seeing” (see Bortoff, 1996), than mere thought alone. Similarly, Tsoukas and Chia (2002, p. 571) encourage us to dwell more in the world, drawing on the advice of Henri Bergson:

Dive back into the flux itself, he says; turn your face toward sensation; bring yourself in touch with reality through intuition; get to know it from within or, to use Wittgenstein’s (1958) famous aphorism, “don’t think, but look” (para. 66). Only a direct perception of reality will enable one to get a glimpse of its most salient characteristics—its constantly changing texture, its indivisible continuity, the conflux of the same with the different over time.

Like Intellectual Shamans, scholars who wish to have the qualities of the Wayfinder scholars seek to know the world from within and from direct experience; they do not remove themselves and consider it from afar, in an abstract and detached manner. They are not confined to limited, filtered and abridged accounts of reality mediated by research instruments, theories and self-interested publishing objectives. They embrace an expansive intelligence that includes sensation, perception, imagination, emotion, symbols and spirit, as well as concept, logic and rational empiricism. They relish the process of making interconnections—seeing the relationships to the whole and as more than chunks of data—and in doing so they give life to hope for a better world.

**Edgewalkers**

The third worldview or perspective that can be useful to scholars who see a need to change the prevailing academic paradigm is that of Edgewalkers. Edgewalkers, in the management academic sphere, are those who build bridges between the invisible and visible world (Neal, 2008). They have a strong inner life and are driven more by a sense of calling than by playing the academic game. In addition to sphere intelligence, they have spiritual intelligence (Wigglesworth, 2014).

Based on research with successful business leaders who have a deep commitment to their spirituality, Neal (2006) found five Edgewalker qualities and five Edgewalker skills shared by these leaders. These same qualities and skills exist in Intellectual Shamans and Wayfinder scholars.

The first quality, and one that is bedrock and essential to those who are willing to challenge the academic system, is self-awareness. You must know who you are on a deep spiritual level and you need to be aware of whether your motivations to change things are ego-based or a process of “calling the island to us”.

The second quality flows from self-awareness and that is the quality of passion. Waddock’s (2013a) interviews of Intellectual Shamans provide example after example of scholars who are passionate about their work, even in the face of criticism and potential damage to their careers.

The third quality is integrity. Ruiz (2012), a shamanic teacher from the Toltec tradition, encourages readers to “be impeccable with your word—speak with integrity”. The traditions we are writing about in this paper all take the
perspective that we create our reality with our thoughts and our words and it is our responsibility to think and act for change impeccably.

The fourth quality of Edgewalkers in management academia is that they are visionary. They care about the future of leadership, organizations and management students and they may literally have visions of the future. Like shamans of old, they go into altered states of consciousness to sense into the future and to bring that information back to the community to share (Bolman & Deal, 1995).

The fifth quality of Edgewalkers is one you don’t find discussed much in academia. It is the quality of playfulness, and they are the ones who are likely to bring creative and artistic modes of expression into the classroom as well as into their scholarship. Research on brain science has shown that playfulness and humour utilize the whole brain and lead to improved problem solving (Gonzalez, 2003). It is this curiosity and playfulness that allow scholars to ask “what if” questions others might not ever consider.

The five skills of Edgewalkers in academia have been described using other language in this paper, but they are specifically shamanic and Wayfinder skills: 1) knowing the future—especially the use of intuition; 2) risk-taking and courage; 3) manifesting from visions into reality; 4) focusing on intention for the highest good; and 5) connecting people, theories and research methods that may not have been seen as connected previously.

Edgewalkers in academia are committed to bringing their full selves—body, mind, emotion and spirit—to everything they do, and they are committed to doing work that moves organizations and the human race forward.

Comparing Intellectual Shamans, Wayfinders and Edgewalkers

Intellectual Shamans, Wayfinder scholars and Edgewalkers are similar in their orientation towards holistic understanding, based on both experience and intuition (realistic and deep understanding of the experienced world that sheds insight), to gain insights. All work from a reflective and self-aware stance and read the “signs” in the world around them to find their ways forward towards their main functions (Table 1). Intellectual Shamans are fundamentally seers and healers, who gather information by connecting across a variety of boundaries and envision the situation and explain it in ways that others can understand through their sensemaking. Wayfinders are discoverers and explorers, who take a vision (i.e. that an island or a better world exists) and mobilize others to help them find the way forward toward that new reality. Edgewalkers are the integrators of the spiritual and the material worlds and are deeply focused on turning future possibilities into reality.
Table 1 Comparing Intellectual Shamans, Wayfinder Scholars and Edgewalkers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intellectual Shamans</th>
<th>Wayfinder scholars</th>
<th>Edgewalkers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seer and healer—seeing new ways to heal cultural mythologies, finding new information, seeking wisdom from (spiritual) sources</td>
<td>Discoverer—intentional journeying to new lands, new realms based on in-depth knowledge of the landscape and reality around them</td>
<td>Visionary—engaging in visioning practices in order to know and create a more desired future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connector—working across boundaries, risking connections others do not make, exploring new realms for insight they provide, connecting with ancient wisdom (collective unconscious)</td>
<td>Explorer—crossing unexplored boundaries, risking to seek out new worlds, explore new realms and open up new channels of possibility</td>
<td>Bridge-builder—seeing connections that others do not and discovering ways that these connections can be made intellectually, relationally, or spiritually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sensemaker—helps others make sense of what has been learned by healing relevant cultural mythologies using information from a variety of sources</td>
<td>Sign reader—carefully reads signs, and the relationships between signs, in their environment, uses feedback from everyone in the group and sacred and ancestral knowledge to make sense of what has been learned and discovered</td>
<td>Futurist—integrating traditional ways of knowing the future (i.e. forecasting, predictive statistics, etc.) with intuitive ways of knowing (i.e. altered states of consciousness, art, ceremony)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dreams the world into existence</td>
<td>Calls the island</td>
<td>Manifester—uses visualizations, affirmations and other energetic methodologies to give form to the invisible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takes the (intellectual) risk, to create new memes, curates new spaces that serve the purpose of healing some aspect of the world</td>
<td>Takes the vision and mobilizes others to find the way, operationalizing risks on the journey to the new reality</td>
<td>Risk-taker—operating from a deep sense of trust in guidance from a higher source and from inner guidance about one’s calling</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Academics need to engage all Intellectual Shamanic, Wayfinding and Edgewalking functions; they are complementary, hand-in-hand facets of being wholly effective. Our message is to become all three in the academic world to see the space/island and take people with you on the journey to the new destination. Intellectual Shamanism, Wayfinding and Edgewalking all involve seeing the world anew, which is similarly important to a re-visioning of the academic role.
for management scholars, as well as to how academics envision their research work.

Explicitly acknowledging the healing role, as the Academy of Management did in articulating its vision (noted earlier), is crucial to undertaking the intellectual risks associated with the pioneering work of many Intellectual Shamans, who develop new memes, start new lines of work and create new spaces for other scholars that serve the healing purpose. Finding a new island by reading the signs is how the Wayfinder operationalizes the risks of the journey. Like the shaman and the Edgewater, who also rely on (spiritual) guidance from going deep within in the trance (or flow, cf. Csikszentmihalyi, 1991) state, the Wayfinder guides others to the new reality and is both explorer and discoverer. Exploring without discovering is meandering, and discovering without exploring is mere happenchance—or simply wandering.

Epistemologically, the shaman and Edgewater calls for spiritual guidance, while still grounding their ideas and sensemaking in the reality of observation and experience in the material world; the Wayfinder by carefully reading the environment, as well as calling upon spiritual and ancestral guidance, also focuses on the experienced world; while the Intellectual Shaman attempts to heal the local cultural mythology when it is “broken” so that the patient and the community can heal. All are open to input from the world that can connect across what might otherwise look like boundaries (note that this is the connecting function of the Intellectual Shaman as well). Academics similarly need to open up to observations and experiences that suggest where problems are that might be understood in new ways—and be open to finding new islands; that is, finding new ways to reach an understanding of those problems that go beyond traditional methods and approaches, while still remaining rigorous and scholarly.

Intellectual Shamans’ ideas of “dreaming the world into existence”, Wayfinders’ notions of letting the island come to them and Edgewater concepts about building bridges between worlds, have similar characteristics that allow the future to open up before them, with all the signs and patterns that can be seen and used to make sense of that world. Each put the individual, and arguably the scholar, in the position of taking an (intellectual, cultural, or personal) risk that allows them to bring others into their vision, so that more people can engage in the same journey in the case of Wayfinder scholars and Edgewalkers, or new mythology in the case of the Intellectual Shaman. For the academic, these risks involve generation or promulgation of new memes and ideas that help to reshape thinking and our relationship to the world around us.

The future orientation of the Intellectual Shaman, the Wayfinder scholar and the Edgewater is also important. If management academics are to understand and help to heal the fraught world described at the opening of this paper, they need to be able to look not just at what has happened in the past, which is the focus of much research, but also to be able to envision—and communicate—what is likely to happen in the future and help others to “see” and shape that future. They can do this task by focusing on new memes, new ideas that help to reshape our own cultural mythologies (e.g. away from growth at any cost as
the underlying mechanism for business to a true sustainability agenda, as one example). They can also do this task by teaching ancient and non-traditional methods of knowing the future.

Wayfinding scholarship, Intellectual Shamanism and academic Edgewalking require a reflexive (or perhaps an artistic) practice, taking time to check in with oneself and reflecting on one’s own responses and reactions to gain greater perspective, sometimes based on intuitive inner “knowing” that is not readily subject to empirical testing. That is part and parcel of traveling to new realms to make needed connections that are not already being made. We step back and look at ourselves from a distance; being an observer of ourselves. We challenge our own thinking, let go of assumptions, norms and habits if they are preventing us from seeing what is going on around us. We explore our own thought and reactive processes that cause us to react to the world in a particular way. We do this practice individually through our work and collectively in our work with others, to get to new ways of thinking and acting that might prove helpful, insightful and novel. Then we write about the things that we discover so that others, too, might discover them. This process is one of awakening to what is and to what might be.

**Coming back to hope**

Be the change that you wish to see in the world (Mahatma Gandhi).

Intellectual Shamans, Wayfinder scholars and Edgewalkers in a real sense dream the world they want to see into existence (Viloldo, 2008) or allow the “island” (ideas, thoughts, memes) to come to them crafting new ideas, linkages and stories that provide hope, health and holism. Such dreams serve as a pedagogy of hope in research, teaching and learning, or in the crafting of new organizational and societal forms.

Think of the description of what it is that Wayfinders do: challenge assumptions, discriminate among various sources and types of information, adopt a multi-perspectival approach, link to others and their thinking in meaningful relationships and recognize their own limitations that might get in the way of seeing. Think of what the shaman does in focusing on healing both patient (theory, idea, practice) and related cultural myths, crossing boundaries that divide and separate ideas to create more holistic visions and then helping others understand the insights that have been gained. Think of what the Edgewalker academic does, always visioning what is evolving in theory and practice and what trends in management are wanting to emerge. These skills require deep personal (and interpersonal) awareness, some of which can be fostered through various forms of mindfulness practices, through open engagement with multiple sources of learning, working with people different from oneself and deeply engaging with research participants in co-learning processes rather than assuming that the researcher has all the relevant and useful knowledge.
Intellectual Shamans, Wayfinder scholars and Edgewalkers attune to a purpose that oftentimes others cannot see yet, and in doing so, may need to resist that which is imposed by “society”, others, or institutions within which they dwell. What is called for here, then, is a deep self-knowledge and deep engagement with the issues of interest, intellectually or in practice, across multiple boundaries, i.e. disciplinary boundaries, research-theory boundaries, theory-practice boundaries, teaching-research boundaries, or whatever the boundaries that constrain. They learn from experiences, gain insights from engagement and explore the phenomenon of interest, question what is “known” and then trust—and follow—their instincts to find out what is really going on and guide the scholarship that matters most to the world (cf. Whetten, 2001). “One of the most powerful forms of protest is to capture a space and transform it into something else” (Tufano as cited in Bargh, 2007, p. 128) and rather than abdicate the space, or capitulate entirely to the rule of status quo, Intellectual Shamans, Wayfinder scholars and Edgewalkers see and create spaces for others to enter.

And for our readers we ask, what is the “island” that you are envisioning, what do you see in your mind’s eye, in your heart? What cultural mythologies do you see that demand healing? What new worlds need bridging? The first step to Intellectual Shamanism, Wayfinding scholarship and Edgewalking is developing courage and self-understanding, where courage is not bravado but simply the willingness to step towards uncertainty with hope of understanding and an open mind. Consider what is truly important to you in your work and life. If simple career advancement, lots of citations and high journal impact factors come to the top of the list, then perhaps the path of Intellectual Shaman, Wayfinder scholar or Edgewalker is not for you, since these paths are risky and fraught with uncertainties. If, however, phrases like helping others, making the world a better place, doing meaningful work that matters, are the ones that come to the fore, then you may be ready to take the necessary risks that all Intellectual Shamans, Wayfinder scholars and Edgewalkers take. Cultivate awareness and openness, holistic, systems thinking, sphere intelligence and spiritual intelligence by deeply engaging in reading, listening and observing, reflecting on interrelationships and practices that open you up to new phenomena, ideas, inspiration and insights. Whether these practices include working with others of a different persuasion or disciplinary background, mindfulness practices, artistic endeavours that allow for deep insights, or something else that moves you, is entirely up to you. This work is about personal engagement with what matters in the world and to you—and the only person who can make that determination for you is you.

Think then about the contexts that intrigue you, the issues that seem to call to you, what questions or inquiries arise and go explore them to find out what is going on in that relevant system. Yes, such approaches are time-consuming and difficult; and yes, institutions focused on granting tenure solely from “A” journal “hits”, are unlikely to reward such efforts in the short term. But suppose, just suppose, that you are asking interesting new questions on issues that matter—and publishing your results widely. Just suppose you do open up some new intellectual or research territory and suppose that work becomes widely recognized, even if the “A” journals fail to find it acceptable. Perhaps
the institution focused so narrowly on citation counts and top tier journals is not the best intellectual home for your path-breaking work and you will have to make a difficult career choice to switch to an institution that values what you do. Or, just possibly, if you do “good” work—lots of it—and get it published, somewhere and become known for that work, your own institution will value it and you. Risky? Yes. But how else, if we are to change the system in which are embedded than to, as Gandhi said, to “Be the change we wish to see the world”? How else are we to bring about change in that system than to begin acting in ways that move us towards fulfilling our own purposes, while nurturing and challenging the world around us?

Being awake is to also see what “gets us” and has us in the grip of deep assumptions and what can inhibit our ability to perceive fully. We enjoin with other voices pressing for new approaches in response to climate change, ethical failures, social, cultural, economic and ecological inequities and the litany of other ways in which business as usual is failing to deliver holistic well-being (Hart & Dowell, 2011). By becoming Intellectual Shamans, Wayfinding scholars and Edgewalkers, we can potentially help meet the challenge of creating a “form of commerce that uplifts the entire human community in a way that reflects both natural systems and cultural diversity” (Hart & Dowell, 2011, p. 1476). Through the power of our intention and the strength of collective will (Nicholson et al., 2015), we can become brave enough to take up the challenge of seeing and calling new islands, new ideas, new ways of doing scholarship and being scholars, to us. If you hear this call then hope rests with you.

The Intellectual Shaman, the Wayfinding scholar and the Edgewalker:

...like the traditional navigator, is not afraid to journey to new places. They go beyond the knowable “business as usual” and journey on voyages of discovery to new horizons. They let go of the troubled anchor of conventional business and set sail in search of better ways of doing business. They want to see what is really going on and are willing to unpack their mental maps to do so, and weave new mental cartographies that discern the detail and see the whole. Wayfinder scholars [and Intellectual Shamans and Edgewalkers] are open to a relational way of being in the world, with each other and with ecology. Their personal and professional strategy is to help business take the journey along routes that contribute meaningfully, ethically and substantially to wealth and well-being (adapted from Spiller, 2012).

Being an Intellectual Shaman, Wayfinder scholar and Edgewalker is not an easy path. But, as Rabbi Hillel the Elder, writing before the time of Christ, said, “If I am not for myself, who will be for me? If I am not for others, what am I? And if not now, when?” (Hillel, Pirkei Avot, Ch. 1:14).

References


