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**Paradoxical leadership in public sector organisations: Its role in fostering employee resilience**

**ABSTRACT:** *Government organisations, and their employees, need to be resilient to manage challenges such as resource constraints, rising demands, and the inherent tensions and contradictions that underlie much public sector work, often stemming from the need to balance different stakeholder interests. Employee resilience, defined here as the capacity to continuously adapt and flourish, even in the face of challenge, is an individual level construct that also benefits organisations. Despite its benefits, little is known about how to foster it. Paradoxical leadership (PL) - the ability to balance competing structural and relational demands over time - may be one means of supporting employee resilience, as it corresponds to the tensions and paradoxes that underlie much public-sector work. PL can help manage tensions in public administration (PA) work, and to employees with both the skills and motivation to behave resiliently. Using a quantitative survey design (n=233) in a large New Zealand public sector organisation, our findings show that the effect of PL facets on employee resilience are partially mediated by perceptions of organisational support, and that some facets of PL, such as treating people both individually and uniformly, are more salient than others. Findings indicate that paradoxical leadership enhances resilience in PA.*

Key words: Public administration, leadership, paradox, perceived organisational support, employee resilience

Summary at a glance: Paradox, leadership and resilience.

## **Introduction**

Public sector employees need to be resilient to cope with increasingly dynamic environments that demand flexible responses to constant challenge and shock (Lewis, Andriopoulos and Smith 2014). Organisations, consequently, need to consider what enables resilience. Although effective leadership has long been recognised as one means of doing so, to build both adaptive organisations and employees (Howell and Avolio 1993; Lengnick-Hall, Beck and Lengnick-Hall 2011), little is known about what specific leadership styles actually help build a resilient workforce. Leading paradoxically may be one such effective form of leadership, as it supports employees to embrace inherent tensions and paradoxical challenges in their jobs (Hood and Peters 2004). We propose that the correspondence between this leadership style and public sector job demands may foster employee resilience. PL is likely to provide relevant resources such as developing new skills to better confront challenges, increase motivation, and foster perceptions of organisational support.

Demands on public sector employees are complex and enmeshed, as individuals and organisations are required to balance multiple, and often contradictory, objectives (Plimmer, Gill and Norman 2011; Wallis, 2010; Wällstedt and Almqvist 2015). These objectives can also be paradoxes, a term used here to refer to the coexistence of two opposites (Zhang et al. 2015). Public servants must deal with many contradictions and paradoxes in their job, often in environments which are managed in very linear, traditional, hierarchical ways (Bason 2018). In this environment, public servants must deal with processes and achieve outcomes which in themselves may seem to be in apposition to each other. For example, they may need to collaborate across networks, while also facing pressure to retain centralized accountability and decision making (Witesman and Wise 2009). They are expected to adopt private sector techniques while also adhering to the community-centred values of public service; apply rules consistently while also being sensitive to individual citizen needs; and maintain regulatory

controls while also empowering communities (Bryson, Crosby and Bloomberg 2014; Fisher 2014; Lægreid 2018).

Public leaders and employees therefore need to address, and even embrace, tensions and perspectives in order to resiliently respond to continuous challenges (Podger et al, 2004). Unfortunately, these tensions and contradictions extend beyond job demands, to the work context, and the management of public servants themselves (Murphy et al. 2017). Management reforms are layered on top of one another in a contradictory fashion, often without much integration (Christensen 2014; Colley 2001). For instance, decentralization of human resources has led to the removal of many traditional controls, but the training and systems needed to make liberalisation and decentralisation work has at times been lacking, and constrained by a tradition of control (Lægreid 2018).

Because of these complex pressures resilience, and its drivers, matter. This paper explores how facets of paradoxical leadership, can contribute to employee resilience.

## **Resilience**

Resilience precedes outcomes such as job satisfaction, motivation and wellbeing (Brennan 2017; Youssef and Luthans 2007). It has been touted as essential for successful organisational functioning, including intra- and inter-organisational cooperation, organisational learning, knowledge sharing and organisational flexibility (Jozaei and Mitchell 2018). Resilience is similar to the organisational level construct of adaptive capacity, which concerns the ability of a system or organisation to “constantly and continuously evolve to match or exceed the needs of the operating environment, before those needs become critical” (Stephenson, Vargo and Seville, 2010, p. 28). The capacity involves long-term, sustainable adjustments to changing environments (Gallopín 2006). Although some practices such as information sharing are known ways to foster *organisational* resilience, less is known how to

foster *employee* resilience (Khan et al. 2017). The two, however, seem mutually reinforcing (Lengnick-Hall et al. 2011). Without employees engaging in resilient behaviours, they stand little chance of responding and adapting effectively to changing circumstances and challenges.

Employee resilience has been defined as “the capacity of employees to utilise resources to continually adapt and flourish at work, even when faced with challenging circumstances” (Kuntz, Näswall and Malinen 2016, p. 460). This modern view of resilience as a developable, day to day capacity differs from earlier views of it as recovery from crises. It also acknowledges person-environment interaction, in that resilient behaviours are more likely when there is an environment that enables such behaviour (Kuntz et al. 2016). It is not an innate, or trait-like, characteristic such as hardiness or grit (Credé, Tynan and Harms 2017). Instead, it is developed through behaviours that become learned daily habits which, over time, can grow and develop (Yost 2016). These habits, when engaged with collectively, can help organisations to “continually achieve desirable outcomes amid adversity, strain, and significant barriers to adaptation or development” (Sutcliffe and Vogus 2003, p. 94).

Resilience is centred around three overlapping behaviours: network-leveraging, learning, and adaptability (Kuntz, Malinen, and Näswall 2017). Together, these behaviours support the protection and acquisition of further job and personal resources to deal with work challenges (Hobfoll 2001). Employees with network-leveraging ability can effectively collaborate, facilitate information sharing and cooperate across teams and functions (Lengnick-Hall et al. 2011; Uzzi 1997), thus facilitating access to, and exchange of, resources (Mitchell, O’Leary, and Gerard 2015). Network-leveraging may in turn bolster other resilient behaviours such as problem-solving and seeking feedback, as it allows for the adaptive use of collective competencies to resolve shared issues and challenges (Hardy, Lawrence, and Grant 2005). In PA, varied demands from diverse stakeholders both inside and outside

organisations make network leveraging both important and difficult (O'Leary and Bingham 2009). Collaboration, for instance, is often called for at both individual and organisational levels but it often faces contradictory pressures. Strong, centrally mandated performance-orientations call for outputs and rule compliance while decentralised structures, work units and other stakeholders seek outcomes and responsiveness (Getha-Taylor 2008). While traditional centralized decision processes may no longer fit the complexity of much public sector work, collaboration is arguably harder and requires a different set of 'soft' competencies than the default rule following of the past (Guy, Newman and Mastracci 2014; Scott and Bardach, 2018). Although information sharing, interpersonal awareness, and cooperation are all highly relevant, they have not always been valued (Getha-Taylor 2008), but are part of employee resilience.

Learning, another aspect of employee resilience, supports innovation and helps develop competencies and knowledge necessary to remain effective during crises (Kuntz et al. 2017). This skill matters in under-resourced but dynamic and complex public-sector environments (Christensen 2014). Learning goals, as opposed to rigid performance goals, have a well-established record in supporting wellbeing, performance and growth, supporting deep learning that builds capacity (Winters and Latham 1996). At the organisational level, a learning orientation helps use new information, understand multiple perspectives, and challenge assumptions to improve future actions. These in turn help public sectors adapt to changing demands (Salge and Vera 2012).

The third key behavioural component of employee resilience, adaptability, occurs when individuals use personal and job-related resources to respond swiftly to uncertainty and change. It comprises the ability to: manage resources effectively, cope with high workloads, respond to, and learn from errors and crises, and use change as an opportunity for growth (Kuntz et al. 2017).

These behaviours are all closely interlinked and mutually reinforcing. They are not discrete. For instance, collaboration enables learning, and requires adaptability. Adaptability is easier with help from others (collaboration) and often stems from, and creates, learning (Folke et al. 2010). Thus we propose that a person who has resilience-enabling support would be one who collaborates well with others, learns from them, and likely contributes to individual and organisational learning. They would adapt to changing circumstances easily in the job, and utilise personal and social resources they had, or could acquire. In contrast, a person who lacks resilience-enabling support may find collaboration difficult; and not learn easily, through facing contextual barriers or a reluctance to engage with new ideas. They may also struggle with change. Such people are not unknown in government. Leadership that does not match the changing demands on public services, and their employees, may be a factor in this.

## **Leadership**

The need to shift from rational and linear leadership approaches, towards more decentralised, organic, and adaptive approaches is well established in PA studies (Ospina 2017; Zeier et al. 2018). Common arguments are to take collective responsibility for solving complex problems (Dunoon 2002), deal with crises and thrive in post-crisis contexts, and ensure adaptation to dynamic demands and environments. Despite this, traditional models of leadership persist in government. This may be partly because public scrutiny and accountability create a strong demand for hierarchy, or because leadership standards are often low (de Waal 2010; Taylor 2017). Public sector leaders are caught in a tension between the devolution associated with local responsiveness, and the hierarchies associated with public accountability. Neglect of one of these polarities is unlikely to be effective, yet public managers have little knowledge of how to maintain and manage this tension (Zeier, Plimmer and Franken 2018).

So far, mainly traditional conceptions of leadership have been explored in resilience studies, and a public sector specific approach to studying leadership remains underdeveloped. Valero, Jung and Andrew (2015) posit that to respond effectively to public sector uncertainties and state emergencies, leaders need to be able to “motivate, communicate, and articulate an organisation’s mission” to followers (p. 4). Not surprisingly, the authors go on to associate transformational leadership with organisational resilience (Valero et al. 2015). Harland et al. (2005) also found that particular dimensions of both transactional and transformational leadership can potentially contribute to resilience in subordinates. For example, the transformational and transactional dimensions of Intellectual Stimulation and Contingent Reward help subordinates’ resilience, while others do not, such as Active and Passive Management by Exception (Harland et al. 2005). The key message here is that developing employee resilience is complex and likely involves a diverse set of leadership competencies and approaches, some of which may seem paradoxical or in tension with each other.

However, universal models of leadership, while valuable and relevant, have limitations, particularly in terms of how they may not fit the tensions and demands of public sector work. For instance, transformational leadership includes a compelling vision – something which fits uncomfortably with sometimes fickle democratic accountabilities and political imperatives, or helping to find solutions in the community (Bouwhuis, 2007). Transactional leadership omits the importance of service to others, or public service motivation, a feature of many PA studies. Although traditional concepts apply to PA (Van Wart 2011; Taylor 2017), public leadership also needs to transcend these conventional notions, such as transformational and transactional approaches, if it is to effectively adapt to change and challenge. In particular, it needs to address the tension, paradoxes and ambiguities in PA. These are well established in public administration (Lipsky 1980), but few

studies address how to manage them (Dunoon 2002; Murphy et al. 2017). Leading through paradox corresponds with the complex and pluralistic environments that often characterise PA.

Non-PA contexts also struggle with complexity and pluralism, and studies of paradoxical leadership (PL) in the management literature are similar to studies about the complexity, tensions, and paradoxes in the PA literature. PL includes balance and integration of competing goals, as leaders “attempt to integrate or harmonise inherent tensions concerning control and empowerment over time” (Zhang et al. 2015, p. 543). It requires “cognitive complexity to juxtapose seeming contradictions, explore potential synergies, and question oversimplified either/or assumptions” (Smith and Lewis 2012, p. 229). In a similar vein, public leaders must integrate seemingly conflicting behaviours, such as the “formal, top-down, administrative functions and [the] informal, emergent, adaptive functions” (Murphy et al. 2017, p. 692). Because of this correspondence between ideas in PL literatures, and the PA context literatures, we argue that PL is likely to foster employee resilience in PA contexts. Specifically, PL could foster resilience through two processes: a) *direct* learning pathway that concerns modelling of behaviours by leaders; and b) an *indirect* social exchange pathway, mediated through perceived organisational support (POS).

### **Paradoxical leadership, POS, and employee resilience**

#### *Pathway between PL and resilience*

Leaders can articulate the tensions in their work context, and model how they can be managed. Followers can then observe and learn necessary skills for managing paradoxes and public administration dilemmas. Through social learning, paradoxically competent leaders promote these skills in their team through flexible decision making, and by articulating to followers the reasoning behind their behaviours (Waldman and Bowen 2016). Further, their

flexibility enables situational awareness and creative problem solving, both of which promote resilience (Waldman and Bowen 2016). Paradoxical leadership skills also entail conflict management, as it actively elicits tensions and to seek creative solutions (Smith and Lewis 2012, p. 229).

Managing paradoxes, such as between structural and relational demands would also foster work environments, in which subordinates know “clearly what to do and how to do it” (Zhang et al. 2015, p.546). In such circumstances, paradoxical leaders use their authority to establish high work requirements, but let subordinates use personal strengths and capabilities, and have discretion and influence, to achieve job and personal goals. When combined with social learning, these work environments would provide the standards, the opportunity and the means to behave resiliently.

*Indirect pathway between PL and resilience, mediated through POS*

As PL corresponds to public service job dilemmas, perceptions of fairness and social exchange would be improved, relating to higher POS. POS, a well-researched phenomenon, facilitates a positive organisational orientation in employees, which in turn enhances motivation to help the organisation (Richard et al. 2015). Past studies have identified how perceptions of wider organisational support can stem from line manager behaviours, and how subordinates consequently reciprocate not just to their leader, but also the wider organisation through a range of social capital and task/citizenship behaviours (Ladd and Henry 2000). These processes, reflective of social exchange, can be enhanced by effective leadership and high-quality leader-follower relationships (Gottfredson and Aguinis 2017). PL, mediated through POS, would motivate followers to face tensions and paradoxes in their jobs, learn new things, adapt to change and ultimately develop their resilience.

Previously found consequences of POS include “taking actions to protect the organisation from risk, offering constructive suggestions and gaining knowledge and skills beneficial to the organisation” (Eisenberger and Stinglhamber 2011, p. 189). Such consequences are similar to aspects of employee resilience, such as the ability to conceptualise novel solutions, take initiative, and share information and knowledge (Lengnick-Hall et al. 2011).

### *PL Facets*

Although PL has been discussed extensively in the literature, to our knowledge there is only one empirically tested model for its measurement. The Zhang et al. (2015) model represents a multi-faceted view of paradoxical leadership behaviours, comprised of a) *uniformity and individualisation*, b) *self- and other- centeredness*, c) *decision control and autonomy*, d) *distance and closeness*, and e) *work requirements and flexibility*. These facets are likely have separate and unique relationships to resilience, as they independently touch on significant bodies of research in both the public administration and management fields.

The facet of treating followers uniformly whilst also allowing individualisation concerns allowing individuals’ strengths to shine, whilst at the same time fostering a structure where team members can contribute confidently without being overly competitive or individualistic (Zhang et al. 2015). Such leadership can promote healthy, team-based collaboration, which in turn encourages learning and adaptability. This paradox is similar to dilemmas facing government managers, who must often balance collective needs for consistency with fairness and consideration of individuals. The modelling of how to deal with parallel dilemmas in public administration, between individual goals and fairness with others, is likely to encourage employee resilience because they require similar skills such as network leveraging and learning.

Treating people uniformly as a group, as well as indicating special concern for individuals, can influence employees' perceptions of fairness, and in turn contribute to POS (Moideenkutty et al. 2001). Equitably empowering employees and recognising accomplishments, strengthens both individual and group commitment to the organisation (Wayne, Shore and Liden 1997). Employees respond to fair recognition by perceiving their context as supportive, and reciprocate with meaningful behaviours (Blau 1986). Positive leader-follower exchanges, often underpinned by trust, matter in public contexts, and predict motivation among public sector employees (Gould-Williams and Davies 2005). By influencing the fairness and justice perceptions of employees, paradoxical leaders can facilitate innovative, extra role behaviours reflective of resilience (Janssen 2000).

Another important paradoxical behaviour of leaders is the combination of both self, and other centredness. This concerns maintaining a strong sense of self, while also having and showing humility to others (Waldman and Bowen 2016). A combination of confident and considerate leadership is likely supportive and confidence-enhancing for employees, and would emulate skills needed for collaboration, adaptability, personal growth and learning (Owens, Wallace and Waldman 2015). An element of self-centeredness on the part of leaders helps to establish their role as an agent of influence (Zhang et al. 2015), while concern for others can be shown through using their strengths, and sharing the limelight. While leader self-centeredness may create high expectations, concern for others should also create a team environment that would encourage learning and other resilient behaviours. This combination of influence and concern would also enhance social exchange with subordinates, and hence POS. In public administration, officials must often maintain a strong sense of clear boundaries and authority to ensure regulatory compliance, while also being humble to listen to community members (Lipsky 1980).

The decision control/autonomy facet relates to leaders controlling “subordinate behaviour and decision making while giving employees discretion to act flexibly and autonomously” (Zhang et al. 2015, p. 543). This models a norm of discipline and order, but also communicates the importance and means of solving problems proactively and challenging these norms of control when necessary. In turn, this behavioural facet builds a bounded environment by preserving decision control for structural roles, but promoting proactive, autonomous behaviours in periods of uncertainty, signalling that bending rules is sometimes necessary for individual and organisational learning and adaptation (Zhang et al. 2015). This willingness by leaders to bend rules on occasion for followers would in turn strengthen POS. This corresponds to dilemmas of public administration, where mixes of both managerial control for organisational outcomes, and street level bureaucrat knowledge of context and person make autonomy necessary (Lipsky 1980).

The fourth facet of paradoxical leadership concerns striking a balance between distance and closeness. This paradox, between maintaining both status/role differences, and interpersonal connections, likely helps employees perceive their leaders as charismatic and authorised to make difficult decisions, while also ensuring that their needs are understood and considered (Shamir 1995). This modelling of both maintaining role responsibilities while also building relationships, would provide a useful framework for network leveraging and other resilient behaviours, and would strengthen leader-follower relationships and develop group norms of appropriate but supportive interactions. This would likely bolster reciprocation by employees through positive work attitudes and behaviours, thus strengthening POS, and the motivation to engage in resilience (Gerstner and Day 1997). In public administration, “clients”, such as those in prison or other institutions, are often non-voluntary and require intense mixes of both personal support and distance.

The fifth facet concerns enforcing work requirements yet also allowing flexibility. This sets norms and standards for bounded work environments, which would help ensure fairness, and help define role clarity, an antecedent of positive job attitudes and behaviours (Lang et al. 2007). Employees would be aware of what is expected of them, and at the same time have discretion to act within this structure. The observed skills from these paradoxical leadership behaviours, and the consequent context, would provide both the means, opportunity and motivation to behave resiliently. Public servants commonly experience requirements to be consistent, yet also exercise discretion and at times bend rules. Police for instance, often make personal decisions about who to arrest (Lipsky 1980).

These facets of PL address the dilemmas inherent in both contemporary public administration, and people management. We argue that employees will consequently have the support, skills and motivation they need to behave resiliently. Thus,

H1: Paradoxical leadership behaviours will be positively related to employee resilience.

H2: The relationship between paradoxical leadership facets and employee resilience will be mediated by perceived organisational support.

**Insert Figure 1 about here**

## **METHODOLOGY**

A large public organisation in New Zealand agreed to take part in this study. It was approached because of its mix of policy, regulatory, service and development functions, and its frequent engagement in demanding public controversies – thus it was experienced in both ‘steady state’ management, and crises. This it was a valid site to assess resilience.

Occupations spanned across a range of ‘backroom’ and public facing services. They were generally reflective of core New Zealand public sector organisational and individual responsibilities and job families such as administration, inspection, regulation, professional, scientist and technician (State Services Commission 2017). An invitation to an anonymous online survey via the Qualtrics survey programme was sent to 500 staff members. This initial sample consisted of 250 employees and 250 managers from six different functional departments, selected by the organisation. The survey gathered a response rate of 47% (80.2% employees, 19.8% managers) (see descriptive statistics Table 1 below).

**Insert Table 1 about here**

### **Measures**

All scales were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree). *Employee resilience* was measured by the 9-item Employee Resilience (EmpRes) scale developed by Näswall et al. (2015). It measures the degree to which respondents engage in resilient behaviours. An example item is “*I effectively collaborate with others to handle unexpected challenges at work*”.

*Perceived organisational support* was measured using the six-item version of the POS scale (Eisenberger et al. 1986). An example item is “*My organisation strongly considers my goals and values*”.

*Paradoxical leadership behaviours* was measured at the individual facet level as intended by Zhang et al. (2015). Supporting this decision was also the fact that we found relatively low intercorrelations during factor analysis, with all factors correlating below .44. The facets measured were: *Treating subordinates uniformly while allowing individualisation* ( $\alpha=.96$ ); *Combining self-centredness with other-centeredness*; *Maintaining decision control while allowing autonomy*; and *Maintaining both distance and closeness* (Zhang et al. 2015, p.

548). Example items for each facet respectively are as follows, all preceded by *My manager...: Uses a fair approach to treat all subordinates uniformly, but also treats them as individuals, Shows a desire to lead, but allows others to share the leadership role, Controls important work issues, but allows subordinates to handle details, Clarifies work requirements, but does not micromanage work, and Keeps distance from subordinates, but does not remain aloof.*

Gender and management responsibilities were controls (both dummy coded).

Factor analysis was conducted on all scales. While perceived organisational support and employee resilience performed as expected as unidimensional measures, further work was needed to achieve a clear factor structure for the paradoxical leadership scale.

The five facet (5-factor) 22-item paradoxical leadership scale (Zhang et al. 2015) showed high statistics for the KMO and Bartlett's test (.90,  $p < .001$ ). However, initial factor analysis yielded some surprising results. As was the case with Zhang et al.'s factor analysis, we expected a 5-factor solution. However, results showed a poor fit as a 5-factor model, with eigenvalues suggesting a 4-factor model and the fifth factor explaining only 2.41% of the variance. Upon inspection of the scree plot it was also clear that there was no point of inflection at component number five.

A combination of item factor loadings  $> .40$ , single factor loadings for items (no cross loadings above .3), Kaiser's criterion (eigenvalues  $> 1$ ), scree plot inspection, and parallel analysis (Hayton, Allen and Scarpello, 2004) were used to determine factor retention decisions. The end result was a 14-item, 4-factor model consisting of *Uniformity and Individualisation* (5 items), *Self- and Other-Centeredness* (3 items), *Control and Autonomy* (3 items), and *Distance and Closeness* (3 items). The factor of *Requirements and Flexibility* was removed due to low factor loadings, cross loading of items across factors, and poor content adequacy.

The remaining items performed well as part of a 4-factor model, with four eigenvalues >1 explaining 66% of the variance.

Correlation and regression analysis (using Hayes' PROCESS tool, Model 4 (Hayes 2012) on SPSS was used to measure the relationships between paradoxical leadership, its four facets, POS, and employee resilience.

### **Findings**

Hierarchical regression analysis revealed that neither control variable had significant effects on POS or employee resilience. Gender was found to be nonsignificant in terms of its effect on both POS ( $\beta = -.06$ ,  $p = .36$ ) and employee resilience ( $\beta = .05$ ,  $p = .49$ ). Thus, it was excluded from the main analyses. However, when included as covariates in the mediation analyses, management level was found to have a significant effect on POS. It was therefore retained and included as a covariate in the analyses.

### **Hypothesis testing**

The correlation matrix below shows positive relationships between three paradoxical leadership facets (uniformity/individuality, self/other, control/autonomy) and employee resilience (see Table 2). Distance/closeness, on the other hand, was not significantly correlated with employee resilience. POS was found to be significantly related to employee resilience, as well as to all paradoxical leadership facets.

### **Insert Table 2 about here**

The coefficients of the mediation analysis are shown in Table 3 below. The direct effect of perceived organisational support on employee resilience was significant ( $\beta = .33^{**}$ ). In regards to the facets of paradoxical leadership, all indirect effects on employee resilience (via POS) were significant. However, the direct effect on employee resilience was only significant for control/autonomy. In addition, all paradoxical leadership facets had significant

effects on POS. Uniformity/individualisation has a particularly strong path to POS as well as the strongest indirect effect out of all of the facets. Distance/closeness, on the other hand, was the weakest facet in its relationship to employee resilience, both directly and indirectly through POS.

**Insert table 3 about here**

## **DISCUSSION**

This study set out to understand how PL could foster employee resilience in a public administration context. Only one facet of paradoxical leadership, Control and Autonomy, had a significant direct relationship to resilience. H1 was therefore largely unsupported. POS, however, mediated the relationship between PL and resilience. Thus support for H2 was strong. In sum, these findings suggest that the POS (mediation) pathway between paradoxical leadership and employee resilience is more consistent across facets than the direct pathway. Arguably, this suggests that high quality social exchanges matter more than the modelling of behaviours that are embedded in the direct relationship between PL facets and resilience. A lack of meaningful, motivational exchanges, rather than limited skill, might be the reason employees do not always act resiliently.

The one direct relationship – between Control/Autonomy and resilience suggests a unique role for this facet in public administration. It may reflect the largely controlled work environments in public services that also require autonomy and discretion for real effectiveness in uncertain environments. It may also signify strong modelling behaviours that directly influence resilience in employees by encouraging both controlled and discretionary behaviours and an awareness of the appropriate situations in which to engage in them. This relates to this leadership behaviour's ability to harness both bounded (controlled) and discretionary (autonomous) work environments in which employees know what is expected

but are then given discretion to do their jobs (Zhang et al. 2015). This facet is uniquely concerned with the work, rather than the social systems of PA agencies. It corresponds to extensive, and long standing, issues in the job design literatures which argue for more autonomy (Wu, Griffin and Parker 2015), and public administration literatures which express concern about red tape and controlling hierarchies (Colley 2001). Concerns about tensions between autonomy and control are pervasive in PA literature, and are often discussed at macro institutional levels (Wällstedt and Almqvist 2015; Witesman and Wise 2009). These findings show that it permeates down to line manager skill sets, and that these in turn may influence important employee behaviours.

In contrast, the other facets (uniformity/individualisation, self/other centredness, distance/closeness) primarily concern the social, or relational systems in PA agencies, and related to resilience only through POS. This indicates that they are primarily a means of motivation through social exchange. For example, considering individual needs equally, whilst showing concern for the wellbeing of the group, may reduce the potential for favouritism and the subsequent divisions it can foster within teams. The strength of the Uniformity and Individualisation facet could be attributed to the role individual consideration and fair recognition has in enhancing perceptions of support (Allen, Shore and Griffeth 2003). It could also be signalling more recognition of collective, relational approaches to leadership in public contexts compared to the earlier reification of controlling new public management (Dunoon 2002; Ospina 2017; Zeier et al. 2018).

Another more relational facet that corresponds to the social aspects of work is self- and other-centeredness. The POS pathway was significant, but not as strong as uniformity and individualisation. Perhaps this signifies that this facet is more about perceptions of the leader's personality rather than what they actually provide for the employee in terms of support, trust, and high-quality interactions, although clearly still important.

The fact that the manager group has slightly weaker indirect effects across the control and autonomy facet is worth noting. Managers are exposed to more of the organisation, and hence have more sources of perceived support. They may therefore view POS as something quite distinct from how their managers lead them.

If leadership matches the reality of employees' jobs and is responsive to the needs of employees, they are more likely to have meaningful social exchanges and get the resources needed to support their performance and wellbeing (Van Wart 2011). These resources may come in the form of leader behaviours, such as direction, delegation, support, or coaching, which may, in themselves be paradoxical, depending on the situation (Hersey and Blanchard 1972). For employees, having a leader who can alternate between different styles to effectively handle different situations is likely seen as supportive and modelling of adaptive, resilient behaviours where necessary (Patel 2010).

A further contribution of our study is on the measurement of paradoxical leadership. Indeed, very little is known about paradoxical leadership in PA, the empirical sense, particularly outside of the Chinese context where the Zhang et al. (2015) scale used in this study originated. The factor analysis of the original 5-factor paradoxical leadership scale (Zhang et al. 2015) yielded unexpected results, leading to the final 4-factor scale. The requirements and flexibility facet may have not loaded as expected because the items themselves do not appear to have strong conceptual linkages to the overall facet. For example, *My manager stresses conformity in task performance, and allows for exceptions* does not necessarily directly relate to either elements of requirements or flexibility. In identifying these discrepancies, this study illuminates how paradoxical leadership might function in a Western context. Potential reasons for unexpected factor structure include the scale's under-studied nature, its development in the Chinese context, and the fact that this is

the first time, to our knowledge, that it has been tested in the public sector (and western) context.

This study has important implications for public leadership scholarship. First, it highlights the relevance and importance of a paradoxical approach to leadership, how it might suit the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of much public sector work, and how it might build employee, and possibly organisational, resilience. It identifies facets of interpersonal leadership behaviours that are relevant to PA.

Practical implications could be training, development and performance management of managers to ensure these paradoxes are managed, rather than suppressed. These facets all represent a meta tension between administrative hierarchical leadership structures versus relational and transformational styles, which characterise much PA leadership research (Van Wart 2011). The relevance of PL reflects calls for more complex, adaptive and inevitably contradictory, forms of leadership to address contemporary public sector dynamics (Dunoon 2002; Murphy et al. 2017; Van Wart 2011). The findings point to tractable competencies that can hopefully be developed.

Second, this research shows that PL can play a significant role in perceptions of organisational support. We also highlight the importance of employee resilience as a crucial capacity for public sector organisations and one the public leadership can, and should, enable.

In sum, this study contributes to research on both resilience in organisations and public management by testing a model that enhances resilience for public, and other, organisations. It does this by illustrating the types of leader behaviours that are beneficial for employee resilience, and revealing the paths by which this process may be experienced by employees, reinforcing the importance of leadership in resilience development (Kuntz et al. 2016).

The paradoxical leadership scale likely does not reflect the public-sector context fully. Further study on PL in PA might identify other facets, or competencies.

Although not addressed directly in this paper, it seems equally important to explore the damaging nature of leaders enacting only one pole of a behavioural paradox, i.e. controlling without allowing autonomy.

This study's cross-sectional nature mean that inferences about causation should be interpreted cautiously; however, cross-sectional studies are beneficial in exploring new relationships and constructs (Spector, 2019).

## **CONCLUSION**

The uncertain and dynamic nature of today's PA environment often requires resilience from employees. This research highlights how public organisations, working in complex and dynamic contexts, can foster resilience in their workplaces. It highlights the key role of public sector managers, and how their actions can affect resilience, particularly through paradoxical forms of leadership that facilitate perceptions of support. This paper's findings also prompt further scholarly consideration on how paradoxical and resilience-enabling leadership in public contexts can be practically developed.

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Table 1: Descriptive statistics of respondents

Total number of respondents		222	%
<u>Gender</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>104</u>	<u>47.3%</u>
	<u>Female</u>	<u>116</u>	<u>52.7%</u>
<u>Age</u>	<u>18-24</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>2.7%</u>
	<u>25-34</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>23.7%</u>
	<u>35-44</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>26.0%</u>
	<u>45-54</u>	<u>57</u>	<u>26.0%</u>
	<u>55-64</u>	<u>41</u>	<u>18.7%</u>
	<u>65 or older</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>2.7%</u>
<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>New Zealand European</u>	<u>146</u>	<u>66.4%</u>
	<u>Māori (NZ's indigenous peoples)</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>5%</u>
	<u>Samoan</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>.5%</u>
	<u>Cook Islands Māori</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>.5%</u>
	<u>Tongan</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>.5%</u>
	<u>Chinese</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>1.8%</u>
	<u>Indian</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>2.7%</u>
	<u>Other</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>22.5%</u>
<u>Managerial responsibility</u>	<u>No managerial responsibility</u>	<u>178</u>	<u>80.2%</u>
	<u>Team leader or middle manager</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>14.4%</u>
	<u>Senior-level manager</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>5.4%</u>
<u>Occupational category</u>	<u>Clerical or Administrative Worker</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>4.1%</u>
	<u>Contact or Call Centre Worker</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>.5%</u>
	<u>Inspection or Regulation Worker</u>	<u>52</u>	<u>23.5%</u>
	<u>Manager (e.g. manager, team leader)</u>	<u>25</u>	<u>11.3%</u>
	<u>Professional (e.g. legal professional, policy analyst)</u>	<u>76</u>	<u>34.2%</u>
	<u>Scientist</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>9%</u>
	<u>Technician and Trades Worker</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>3.2%</u>
	<u>Other</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>14.4%</u>

Table 2: Correlations between measured variables

	<u>Mean</u>	<u>SD</u>	<u>1.</u>	<u>2.</u>	<u>3.</u>	<u>4.</u>	<u>5.</u>	<u>6.</u>
<u>Uniformity and Individualisation</u>	<u>4.9</u>	<u>1.4</u>	<u>.96</u>					
<u>Self- and Other-Centeredness</u>	<u>4.1</u>	<u>1.1</u>	<u>.43**</u>	<u>.72</u>				
<u>Control and Autonomy</u>	<u>4.8</u>	<u>1.2</u>	<u>.42**</u>	<u>.42**</u>	<u>.82</u>			
<u>Distance and Closeness</u>	<u>4.5</u>	<u>1.2</u>	<u>.26**</u>	<u>.30**</u>	<u>.19**</u>	<u>.79</u>		
<u>Employee Resilience</u>	<u>5.7</u>	<u>1.2</u>	<u>.20**</u>	<u>.16*</u>	<u>.23**</u>	<u>.09</u>	<u>.80</u>	
<u>Perceived Organisational Support</u>	<u>4.6</u>	<u>.53</u>	<u>.56**</u>	<u>.30**</u>	<u>.26**</u>	<u>.19**</u>	<u>.31**</u>	<u>.91</u>

*Alphas displayed diagonally.*

Table 3: Total, Direct and Indirect Effects on Employee Resilience, mediated by Perceived Organisational Support.

<u>Predictor variable</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Direct</u>	<u>Predicting</u>	<u>Indirect Effect</u>	<u>Indirect effect</u>			<u>p-value</u>
	<u>Effect</u>	<u>Effect</u>	<u>the</u>	<u>via POS</u>	<u>SE</u>	<u>95% CI</u>	<u>95% CI</u>	
	<u>(c)</u>	<u>(c'/b)</u>	<u>mediator (a)</u>	<u>(ab)</u>		<u>Lower</u>	<u>Upper</u>	
<b><u>Management level</u></b>		<u>-.14</u>	<u>.32**</u>					
<u>Uniformity and Individualisation</u>	<u>.22***</u>	<u>.04</u>	<u>.54***</u>	<u>.18***</u>	<u>.04</u>	<u>.10</u>	<u>.27</u>	<u>.0001</u>
<u>Self- and Other- Centeredness</u>	<u>.17**</u>	<u>.08</u>	<u>.30***</u>	<u>.10***</u>	<u>.03</u>	<u>.05</u>	<u>.17</u>	<u>.002</u>
<u>Control and Autonomy</u>	<u>.23***</u>	<u>.15**</u>	<u>.27***</u>	<u>.09**</u>	<u>.03</u>	<u>.04</u>	<u>.15</u>	<u>.005</u>
<u>Distance and Closeness</u>	<u>.09</u>	<u>.03</u>	<u>.18**</u>	<u>.06*</u>	<u>.03</u>	<u>.01</u>	<u>.12</u>	<u>.02</u>
<u>Perceived Organisational Support</u>		<u>.33***</u>						

Note: \* =  $p < .05$ , \*\* =  $p < .01$ ,  
\*\*\* =  $p < .001$

*Standardised coefficients.*

Figure 1: Hypothesised model

