CLARKE CENTER FOR HUMAN IMAGINATION · UC SAN DIEGO

Applied Imagination

Expanding Behavioral Range Through the Seven Domains

Rita J. King

Senior Fellow for Applied Imagination

THE OPPORTUNITY

We are living in the Imagination Age

People everywhere are navigating unprecedented change. They show up with different realities, beliefs, and skill sets, yet they must work together toward shared goals. There is no widely adopted tool for pragmatic personal evolution that helps individuals become more flexible while keeping groups aligned.

The fragmentation problem

Under pressure, people revert to habitual behaviors. Organizations invest in technical skills but lack a framework for helping individuals and groups adapt from within.

The research question

Can people learn to expand their behavioral range, intentionally adjusting how they respond, in a way that scales from the individual through groups to entire organizations of any type?

THE INSTITUTION

The Arthur C. Clarke Center for Human Imagination

A research center at UC San Diego dedicated to understanding and cultivating human imagination in science, technology, the arts, and everyday life.

Leadership

Erik Viirre, MD, PhD

Co-director. Professor of Neurosciences, UCSD. Research in neurophysiology, neuroethics, and human spaceflight.

Cassandra Vieten, PhD

Co-director. Licensed clinical psychologist. Author of *Imagine That* (Simon & Schuster, 2026), introducing the concept of imagination neurodiversity.

Published Research

A Clarke Center team published in *Frontiers in Psychology*, identifying domains of imagination related to workforce skills and cognitive capacity.

This peer-reviewed foundation supports the case for imagination as a measurable, developable human capacity.

THE RESEARCHER

Rita J. King

Senior Fellow for Applied Imagination

An ethnographer and leadership advisor who has spent two decades studying how people and organizations adapt during periods of transformation. She has worked with leadership teams across Fortune 50 companies, government agencies, nonprofits, and educational institutions in more than 20 countries, from disaster zones to boardrooms. Since 2006 has developed The Imagination Age concept and its main skill, AI as Applied Imagination, not artificial intelligence.

Corporate & Technology

IBM Innovator-in-Residence. Futurist at NASA Langley's National Institute of Aerospace.

Policy & Research

Senior Fellow: Salzburg Global Forum, Aspen Institute, Carnegie Council. Advisor to the National Science Foundation.

Global Field Work

Research and consulting across 20+ countries. Cross-sector work spanning government, education, nonprofits, and think tanks.

THE FRAMEWORK

Seven Domains of Applied Imagination

Each domain represents a distinct pattern of behavior and cognition. Every person has all seven, but leads from one.



Purple	Red	Blue	Orange	Green	Yellow	Aqua
Loyalty	Energy	Structure	Innovation	Empathy	Curiosity	Vision

Energizing: Red, Orange, Yellow

Stabilizing: Purple, Blue, Green, Aqua

ENERGIZING DOMAINS

The drivers of action

Red

Energy, courage, instinct

Moves fast and acts decisively. Brings courage when others hesitate.

Cost: Impulsiveness, impatience, burning through people

Orange

Innovation, agility, results

Pursues novel solutions and high-value outcomes. Thrives on change.

Cost: Scattered focus, unfinished work, treating people as means to an end

Yellow

Curiosity, analysis, reason

Thinks deeply and questions assumptions. Values evidence and logic.

Cost: Overthinking, slow decisions, losing touch with emotions

Each strength and its cost are two sides of the same coin. None is better than another.

STABILIZING DOMAINS

The anchors of cohesion

Purple

Loyalty, belonging, collective security

Creates bonds and protects the group. Builds trust through commitment.

Cost: Blind loyalty, resistance to change, suspicion of outsiders

Blue

Structure, order, reliability

Brings discipline and consistency. Ensures systems run smoothly.

Cost: Rigidity, discomfort with ambiguity, procedure over people

Green

Empathy, collaboration, harmony

Reads people and builds consensus. Creates psychological safety.

Cost: Avoiding conflict, neglecting own needs

Aqua

Mission, sustainability, big-picture vision

Sees the long arc and holds the larger purpose. Thinks systemically.

Cost: Losing sight of immediate needs, trouble with boundaries

THE METHOD

Expanding behavioral range

Everyone has all seven domains. The goal is to learn to turn the dials up and down — practicing different skills as the situation demands. The color-coded system creates a shared vocabulary that scales from one person to an entire organization.

1

Discover

An assessment reveals each person's anchor domain, the single domain they lead from most naturally.

2

Understand

The full stack shows how much of each domain a person exhibits, revealing their complete behavioral profile.

3

Expand

With practice, people learn to turn the dials up and down — intentionally drawing on any domain to meet the moment, rather than defaulting under pressure.

THE RESEARCH

What your support enables

Validation studies

Empirical testing of the seven-domain framework through assessment instruments and longitudinal tracking of behavioral range expansion.

Applied research

Field studies with leaders and teams, **including within supporting organizations**, to measure how expanded behavioral range affects decision-making and collaboration.

Publication

Publication of research in papers, at conferences and other opportunities to promote findings.

Scalable tools

Development of assessment and training instruments that any organization can use to help their people expand behavioral range.

THE IMPACT

Applied means applicable

Individuals

Individuals learn to move beyond default behaviors, expanding their range to meet shifting demands with intention rather than habit.

Groups

The shared vocabulary of seven color-coded domains gives groups of all kinds a common language to align on goals, complement one another's skills, and work through friction.

Organizations

The framework scales. What works for one person or small group works for an organization of any size or type when shared goals drive progress.

Organizations that support this research gain early access to apply the framework within their own groups and leadership.

NEXT STEPS

An invitation to partner

Your support advances rigorous, peer-reviewed research into human imagination at a moment when understanding how people adapt and lead has never mattered more.

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